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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome William Saunders. Mr. Saunders will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon. He is joined by members of his family and the Royal Canadian Legion, St. John's, Branch 1.

Welcome, Mr. Saunders.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome Heather Elliott, advocate for the survivors of sexual assault and gender-based violence, as well as representatives from the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on a point of privilege. O'Brien and Bosc, in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, states: "... Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation."

As per our discussion on Friday, April 12, 2022, I sought your guidance on the point of privilege. I've given you notice and a written copy of my point of privilege.

On April 12, 2022, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards filed a report, which is false and misleading. It gives the impression that I'm not fulfilling my obligations as a Member, as he highlighted on page 3 of the report, which he knew the media would report. Section 38(2) of the act states: "The commissioner may make a recommendation to a member that in order to fulfill the member's obligation under this Part,

the member sell a private interest at arm's length, place the private interest in a trust on those terms and conditions that the commissioner may specify, with or without those other arrangements to be made that will ensure that the member's obligations under this Part are fulfilled."

The legal definition of a private interest is that a private interest includes but is not limited to a financial interest, which pertains to a business whereby a person or a business would gain a benefit, privilege, exemption or advantage from the action of a state, agency or employee that is not available to the general public.

It has been reported in the media that this report is related to the private interest I have in a company. The Commissioner for Legislative Standards put this innuendo in the report to be reported as such. I wanted to make it quite clear I do not own a company; my spouse does not own a company. We are not on any boards or agencies that receive any remuneration or are in any conflict. In fact, we're not even on any volunteer boards.

I challenge the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to produce any evidence that I or my spouse owns a business or we are on any boards or agencies that we are involved with, instead of putting out innuendo, hoping the media will follow up.

Once the Speaker tabled the report, then the desired effect of the Commissioner was accomplished by the report that I be removed from the House of Assembly without presenting any facts.

I challenge any Member to show this House of Assembly where in this report there is anything concrete that I am in a conflict of interest. I must remind all the Members of this House of Assembly that the findings of the *Joyce Report* 2018 were proven by a Supreme Court decision.

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards made the same innuendo in the election report 2021 tabled in this House. He stated that a candidate tried to intercept ballots at Canada Post. A CBC reporter followed up with the access to information, and the Commissioner for

Legislative Standards confirmed to the CBC reporter that that is the date and time.

There was no foundation to this statement; it was false, misleading and once again showed the contempt the Commissioner for Legislative Standards has for me for filing a civil suit against him.

I have completed my Member's disclosure statements for 27 years. There has never been an issue. Even with the current Commissioner in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, but since I filed a civil suit in 2020, there has been ongoing requests for information that many other Members were not requested to provide and I never had to provide until the last two years.

Speaker, I will never give the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, Bruce Chaulk, enough information that he will continue to seek more and more, which I cannot provide as this is the goal to file another report.

Speaker, I will inform the House of the false and misleading statements the report presented to the House of Assembly. The Commissioner, Bruce Chaulk, stated, number one: "Since June 2021, I have requested that MHA Joyce provide me with financial documentation"

The facts are I received an email from the Commissioner Bruce Chaulk on June 11, 2021, stating that my disclosure statements are due on June 11, 2021. I wrote the Commission to state I never received the documents. Mr. Chaulk replied in an email: They were hand delivered to your office on April 12. I informed Mr. Chaulk that I did not have an office. I asked him who he dropped it off to and who he gave them to. "Here is a copy of the Form in PDF, word and the instructions for the completion of the booklet."

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure can confirm that I did not take ownership of an office until April 19, 2021.

To state that he was requesting information from me since June 12, 2021, when he intentionally did not provide me with this documentation until June 11, 2021, is misleading and false. His intent, as he stated in the correspondence, was that I was late filing on June 12, in July and a

part of August when he failed his duty to provide me with the documentation.

Number two, Mr. Chaulk stated in his report: "... I have offered to meet with the member virtually, in person, and in the presence of his legal counsel." I tried on many occasions to meet with Mr. Chaulk and he stated: "I will try to accommodate you."

The Commissioner finally agreed to meet with me on October 26, 2021. I walked in his office and the Commissioner had a third person with him. I stated I was not aware he was bringing a third person. He stated: "He is here to assist me." I informed the Commissioner that I would not be disclosing my personal and financial information in a room to a person I do not know and I immediately left the room.

The Commissioner wrote me stating that this was permitted under Section 34(16) and 34(17) of the *House of Assembly Act*: "... the commissioner may determine those employees and officers that are necessary for the performance of the duties of the commissioner." Section 34(17) states: "... every person employed by the commissioner shall swear an oath"

I asked: Who is this employee? What is his name? Where does he work with in government? The Commissioner informed me he was his legal counsel and he was trying to conceal him as a government employee.

This was unethical, misleading and an abuse of power trying to force me to disclose personal, private and financial information to an outside person. This is when he agreed to meet with my lawyer present, after this incident.

The Commissioner stated in the email: "You have commenced legal proceedings against me in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador." I agree. That is why I have requested the Commissioner for Legislative Standards on 10 occasions that he excuse himself from my file but he flatly refused.

His involvement with my file is unethical and a blatant conflict of interest. The Commissioner informed me that he had to sign off on this anyway. That was his excuse.

I informed him of the *Mitchelmore Report* completed by the Citizens' Representative, but the Commissioner for Legislative Standards stated that he did not participate in the investigation but he has confidence in the Citizens' Rep and imposed a Code of Conduct violation.

This precedent has been set by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards refusing to excuse himself and I feel his end goal was to ensure another Code of Conduct report.

Number three, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards started in this report: "Despite repeated requests and assurances that the information provided to my office is privileged and is never disclosed"

On November 12, 2021, even after the Commissioner tried to force me to divulge my personal information and financial information to his private lawyer, I sent my disclosure statement to the Commissioner to try to get this matter resolved. I stated that I'm doing so under duress due to incidents of trying to work with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. In the letter, I stated: "I am trying to fulfill my obligations as a Member of the House of Assembly." I went on to state: "If you have any questions or seek additional information, please contact me in writing and I will, to the best of my ability, provide the information."

On November 15, 2021, after receiving an email from me on November 12, 2021, that while my disclosure was forwarded to him, he may have it in his possession; the Commissioner for Legislative Standards filed a Code of Conduct violation.

On November 16, 2021, the Citizens' Rep, on notification from the Clerk of the House of Assembly where there was disclosure made to her regarding an email to me by the Commissioner that was copied to a third party. The Citizens' Rep stated: "In my view, this is a potential authorized disclosure of personal information, i.e. a privacy breach.

"I have notified the Commissioner for Legislative Standards of this Privacy Breach and advised him to notify the Privacy Commissioner and enact the relevant sections of the Access to

Information and Privacy manual to contain the breach."

I notified the Privacy Commissioner and there is an active investigation concerning my privacy breach. The Commissioner's assurance that the received information is private is under review. His assurances have no credibility.

Two points to this serious matter: I asked for this information to be returned from my disclosure statement, which the Commissioner refused to do. Secondly, I was informed on February 2, 2022, approximately 105 days later, that he cancelled the investigation on November 17, 2021.

This is an absolute abuse of authority by not notifying a Member that a Code of Conduct violation investigation has ceased and not ensuring a certificate of conduct. This is a type of abuse of authority that the House of Assembly has fostered by allowing the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to file false reports, make false statements to the House of Assembly and the Management Commission and not be answerable to the House of Assembly.

Speaker, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards has made a very serious and telling statement in his report, and I quote: "... some members have missed the statutory deadline for providing information in the past" Why weren't these Members cited for a Code of Conduct? I was singled out by the Commissioner when, by his own submission, many others missed the statutory deadline.

When I was informed on February 2, 2022, that he ceased the investigation on the Code of Conduct violation, I asked for a certificate of conduct, which is required by law. His response in February was that he could not provide me a certificate of good conduct because I did not file my disclosure statement within the 60 days required. This is in context that he did not provide me with the disclosure statement until the deadline was over and refused to meet with me until October.

The question for the House of Assembly is: Are other Members of the House of Assembly, who missed the statutory deadline of 60 days, in good

standing? Why is one MHA singled out when the Commissioner for Legislative Standards stated there are other Members who did not file within the 60 days?

This is evidence of the arbitrary decision of the Commissioner to apply the law as stated in the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, which he does not have the authority. Apply the law to all Members of the House of Assembly equally and not just to the MHA who has filed a civil suit against him. There is no more blatant disregard for the rule of fairness than applying the legislation to one Member rather than all Members.

In his report, the Commissioner stated that I requested an extension to provide a response. That is correct. During the period, I consulted with legal counsel. After explaining the circumstances of the allegations and advice from my legal counsel, I asked the Commissioner permission to have a representative from legal counsel to review the disclosure statements of all 39 Members of the House of Assembly.

This information is public knowledge, but the Commissioner refused access to these public documents. This would provide me with the information on when disclosure statements were finalized and if any Member did not disclose material changes in their reports within the 60 days of the changes.

On February 9, 2022, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards informed me that under section 42(2) of the *House of Assembly Act*, he has initiated an inquiry for failure to comply with the *House of Assembly Act* and the Code of Conduct. He stated: There were specific violations: one, you failed to file your disclosure statement on time as required by section 36(11); two, you failed to provide a complete disclosure and refused to provide supporting documentation as required by sections 36(1), 36(2) and 36(3); three, you failed to report a material change in your holding by 36(4), report any change within 60 days.

He informed me that I violated Principles 1, 6, 7 and 11. Upon the advice of my legal counsel and where the Commissioner for Legislative Standards refused my representatives to review public documents, items one and three were not

included in the final report. So the report that's in front of this House is not the report that I was asked to respond to. It changed and I did not see this report. The reason was evidence from the public documents would have shown that there were Members who filed past the 60-day deadline, but the Commissioner did not file a Code of Conduct.

Secondly, there's at least one Member who had a material change and they did not notify the Commissioner and the Commissioner did not file a Code of Conduct. This is a blatant example of how the Commissioner is using the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* at his discretion without any authority to do so.

Complaint 1: If the Commissioner for Legislative Standards had to execute his duty and provide necessary documentation on April 12, 2021, it would have been completed on time and all the details were explained in early documentation.

Complaint 3: Material changes not reported within 60 days. This action was ceased, as evidence would have shown, by the public documents, that there was at least one Member who had a material change and the change was not reported within the 60 days.

I would also like to provide to the House of Assembly that on August 4, 2021, within 60 days of receiving my disclosure statements in an email to the Commissioner I stated: "I will file when I get the necessary information from the banks as funds were transferred."

On February 9, the Commissioner initiated an inquiry and provided me with three questions for response. The document the Commissioner provided me on April 9 is a stark contrast to the issues that were filed on April 12, 2022. How can the Commissioner expect a Member to justify a report tabled in the House of Assembly as non-compliance when I never seen this report and the allegations changed from February 9 inquiry?

On December 14, 2021, the Commissioner wrote me with four follow-up questions. I was in Africa at the time and responded on December 20, 2021. I replied and clarified and answered

the four questions. The Commissioner wanted to have the public disclosure statement completed within the next week.

Here is my response to the Commissioner: I will not be returning until December 28, 2021, but if I have the letter of confirmation before I leave Africa, I will try and get it scanned and sent back to you. As you are aware, I will have to isolate for five days. If necessary, I can write and confirm and forward the signed letter after isolation. I ask the House: Is this a person who is not trying to fulfill his duties as a Member of the House of Assembly?

The report tabled in the House of Assembly is a stark contrast to the letter the Commissioner provided to me.

Complaint 2, sent to me on February 9, 2022, that I was refusing to provide supporting documentation was concerning how Scotia Bank is investing funds in a Tax-Free Savings Account. Under the federal government Tax-Free Saving Account, you can invest through a financial institution or self-direct. For 10 years, my Tax-Free Savings Account was noted to be not in a conflict as they are with an institution and I am not in control or have knowledge of any of the investments.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Conflict of Interest Act section 2(c) and 2(f) state – section 2(c)(v) of “‘excluded private interest’ means ... a registered retirement savings plan, retirement or pension plan or employee benefit plan, that is not self-administered.” Section 2(f): “‘private interest’ means (i) an interest in a partnership, including an interest in a law partnership, (ii) an asset, loan, liability or financial interest, (iii) a source of income, and (iv) a position of director or officer in a corporation or association.”

There are Members in this House who confirmed to me that they were not requested to provide this documentation. I am not sure how or where the bank invests to provide to the Commissioner this information, as for 10 years they were declared not in a conflict.

When the Commissioner highlighted in his report stating, “Section 38(2) of the Act allows me to make a recommendation to a member that in order to fulfil the member’s obligations, the

member shall sell a private interest at arm’s length, or place a private interest in trust on terms and conditions to ensure the member’s obligations are satisfied,” this is usually a concern for Cabinet ministers.

My disclosure statements are within the guidelines of the conflict of interest. The reference that the Commissioner made in the report is concerning a business interest and ownership, which has not been declared in over 10 years and is not included in the February 9, 2022, letter he sent to me, which I had to respond. They have been excluded private interest for nine years, four of which the Commissioner for Legislative Standards ruled they were not.

I have to provide a complete disclosure. I have no business. I have no private interest. For the Commissioner to infer this is putting my reputation in question. I want to remind the House of Assembly that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, who is presenting this report, is the defendant in a civil suit I filed, which is currently in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. There is a privacy breach investigation ongoing against him for the Commissioner for Legislative Standards providing information to a third party.

It is unethical and a blatant conflict of interest for the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to continue to investigate my file when I have asked him on at least 10 occasions that he excuse himself. However, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards refuses to remove himself.

I am asking that the Speaker find this a prima facie case. I am asking that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards provide documentation to this House that I or my spouse have a business holding, are a part of a corporation which the Member and the Member’s family together hold 10 per cent or more of the shares.

In the absence of this documentation, I’m asking the House of Assembly to order the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to publicly apologize in a letter to myself and to the media in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Furthermore, I’m asking that the House of Assembly assign my disclosure file to another

Officer of the House of Assembly, the Auditor General or a senior staff member from Mr. Chaulk's office, to have this process completed in a short period of time.

The Government House Leader said in an earlier conversation that families should not be brought into the political arena, and I agreed. I trust the Government House Leader will honour those words as it is reported that myself and my spouse are embroiled in a conflict of interest that doesn't exist.

In Maingot, 2016, he stated that if a Member's reputation is questioned, it is definitely a prima facie case. There is no doubt that my reputation is in question by this false report and innuendo by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

I refer to O'Brien and Bosc, page 141, where matters involving privilege before the House of Commons are treated with the utmost seriousness. As you outlined, there is a formal process to be followed. I followed that process and notified the Speaker of my intentions to raise this point of privilege, and this is the earliest possible opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to have a few words about this. I want to say upfront as well to the House, while myself and my colleague here, we do chat on a regular basis and so on, I can honestly say this is the first time I've seen his report, we've had no discussion of it and there certainly was no intent, per se, for me to simply follow him.

But as one Member of this House of Assembly, I cannot – we've seen these things come before the House now a number of times involving this Member. As I have said in the past, and I will repeat to every Member in this House, this could be you or me tomorrow. That's what everybody has to remember. It's easy to sit back and let all this slide, and say, oh, well, that's his problem. But it could be anybody's problem in this House, don't forget that. We should never forget that.

We have a Commissioner for Legislative Standards who was put in place – he's also the Chief Electoral Officer. I could go on a big rant about that again, but I won't at the moment. He's the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. He's the Commission that's supposed to be responsible for ethics. How ironic is that? And this officer reports to this House. He works for us. We don't work for him, Mr. Speaker, and it seems like the tail is wagging the dog, it really does.

When I hear all these inaccuracies that are being raised by this Member on numerous occasions, and he outlined them all here, and we just put our hands up in the air and say, oh, well, that's it. This man's reputation is being called into question. Clearly, in order for this man or anybody in this House of Assembly to do their job, you need to have that confidence; you need to have your reputation in tack. To have this shadow, this dark cloud hanging over this Member's head – and it could be anybody's head tomorrow – is simply wrong.

So I would absolutely agree with the fact that this particular matter should go to somebody else, because clearly there's a conflict – clearly. Let someone else have a look at the records here, whether it's the Auditor General or whoever it is, to clear this matter up.

On top of that, I really believe, as I've said in the past, that this House of Assembly needs to get some answers from this particular Commissioner for Legislative Standards on a number of issues. We need to clear the air. Maybe it's through the Management Commission. I would imagine, it would be the Management Commission, but we cannot continue to have these things coming before the House, when there clearly seems to be questions about the accuracy of it.

I can remember here in this House of Assembly when we were talking about this whole thing: What constitutes a government employee? The Commissioner stood in this House of Assembly and told us one thing and then went down to the courthouse and told the courts something totally different – the opposite. How could that be right? How can we stand for that? How can we have any confidence in an Officer of the House of Assembly to ensure that everything is on the

up and up, everything is being done properly and, most importantly, that every Member in this House of Assembly is being treated fair and square?

I have no confidence. I lost confidence after the election: what a disaster that was. But on top of that, we're seeing these issues with this particular Member. Again, I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, it's not about me per se standing up for this Member, because he's quite capable of standing up for himself. But I look at the fact that it could be any one of us tomorrow. If it's not us, the next election comes and there are new Members here, it could be them.

We've got to have a standard in place. We have to set the bar high for that position. We have to make sure that the position is being professional, that the act is not being abused in any way and that this person understands quite clearly that they report to us. We don't report to them.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I do agree once again with the recommendation that this particular report and the information that's being requested should go to the Auditor General or some other Officer of the House to review. I don't think there should be any further dealings, quite frankly.

We have a court case – how the Commissioner for Legislative Standards could be dealing with this Member's documentation, or having any dealings with him, really, considering the fact that he's taking him to court. That in itself should have been dealt with. The minute that happened, somebody should have said from here on in, until this matter is cleared up, this particular Member will deal with somebody else from that office, not this particular individual, because that is clearly a conflict of interest.

I agree with that part. I also, once again, say to Members of the House, through the Management Commission, let's have a look at it. Let's have a look at the report. Let's have a look at these allegations. The Member is not trying to hide anything; quite clearly, he's putting it all there. He's documenting it all. It's all in *Hansard*. It's not like the Member is hiding stuff or trying to hide behind stuff. He's quite open I'm sure to having everything that he said scrutinized.

So what's wrong with scrutinizing it and seeing if he was treated fair and square? If he wasn't, it needs to be corrected. If he was treated fair and square and he's making stuff up, then he needs to be dealt with. I'm confident that's not the case, but I would say to him, I would look him right in the eye and say: If you are misleading this House, you need to be sanctioned. I'm sure he's not doing that.

But let's get to the bottom of this. This is crazy. We're in this House of Assembly over and over and over again, every time the House is open there's another racket. The people don't want us in here in this House of Assembly having a racket over this foolishness, they really don't. It should never be happening.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again I say to you, it's up to you obviously to make the ruling but I think what's being asked for here is very reasonable. I, for one, will support it.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, I just received the report a little earlier today. I haven't had a chance to go through it thoroughly so I will take it under advisement and report back to the House very shortly.

We'll move on with regular business today.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: For Members' statements today, we have Members for the Districts of St. Georges - Humber, Mount Pearl North, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Stephenville - Port au Port and St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Member for St. Georges - Humber.

S. REID: Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to Al Gillespie, who sadly passed away on April 24 at the age of 58. Until the time of his passing, Al was the mayor of the Town of Massey Drive, a position he held for just over four years. In this role, he contributed greatly to the development and community life in the town where he lived for 17 years. He was a strong advocate for his town, and even as he battled cancer, he was making representation to myself and to others in government.

Al had a successful career as a heavy-equipment salesperson and for the past 17 years, he worked with United Rentals where he developed strong relationships with co-workers and customers throughout the province.

Al was a family man; nothing made him happier than to spend time with his wife and children. He was an avid camper, a proud Montreal Canadiens fan and he loved to make people laugh. Because of his work in the community, the way he lived his life and his cheerful nature, he will be remembered and missed by many.

In conclusion, I ask all Members of the House to join me in offering condolences to the family and many friends of Allan James Gillespie.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Speaker, three years ago Scott Hillyer, owner of Coffee Matters, had an idea: to provide a hot meal to those in need. In October of 2019, with all the churches of Mount Pearl and the city, they started the Community Supper.

It began with the churches being the hosts of these events. Each week a different church would provide the volunteers to help with serving the meals at Park Place, the venue provided by the City of Mount Pearl.

During the pandemic shutdown, with indoor space no longer available, they revamped their plan and began 100 per cent takeout meals from the Salvation Army food truck. Currently, they are still doing takeout meals, but now out of the kitchen of the Church of the Good Shepherd. The churches still provide volunteers to assist and Scott Hillyer and his business oversee the cooking of all these meals. Since moving to the church, they have gone from serving 30 individuals to over 200 people a hot meal twice a month.

Other community groups have joined in the cause to help with funding for one night of meals, with Coffee Matters providing the other. Scott Hillyer is a true example of how community matters.

I ask my colleagues here in the House Assembly to recognize Scott Hillyer and his company, Coffee Matters, for all that they do. Because community matters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Grand Falls-Windsor Elks Lodge was first instituted in October of 1922, with 59 chartered members, after an impostor tried to represent the Elks Lodge two years prior. Upon institution, the lodge began their community work by building a swimming pool and playgrounds for children. They would visit patients at the hospital in Botwood where everyone would receive a parcel of fruit and candy.

When Lodge 59 began, they didn't own their own building so they had their meetings at the K of C Hall until 1953. On August 31, 1953, they held their first meeting in their own building on Beaumont Avenue, with P. F. McDonald as exalted ruler.

Through the years, the lodge continued to visit and help build the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor and, with the help of Cabot Lodge #65, purchased the sound booth at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Care Centre, which is still in use today.

The lodge continues to help special needs children by purchasing bicycles, computers, hearing aids, wheelchairs and assisting the travel expenses when children have to travel for medical treatments.

Please join me as we honour the Grand Falls Elks Lodge and their 100 years of helping our community and citizens. Happy Birthday, Phil.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

It's with great pleasure to announce that Sarah Janes, from Port au Port East, a student at Stephenville High, is the winner of the prestigious Loran scholarship. Sarah is one of two recipients from the province.

In 1988, the Loran Scholars Foundation was the first national organization in Canada to grant undergraduate awards based on academic achievement, extracurricular activity and leadership potential. Sarah was one of 5,174 students from over 1,400 schools throughout Canada who applied in 2022. Sarah was one of 35 students chosen to receive the award valued at \$100,000. Besides the monetary award, the scholarship includes a four-year leadership enrichment program and opportunities to build community with a diverse network of value-driven peers, mentors, alumni and supporters.

Sarah is a long-time member of Girl Guides Canada. She has completed silver and bronze levels of the Duke of Edinburgh program and is a black belt in tae kwon do. She plays flute in her concert band and volunteers at the local thrift store. She is a tutor and also works at her local co-op store.

Sarah credits her parents for helping her achieve this award by involving her in a variety of activities in the area.

I invite all hon. Members of this House to join me in congratulating Sarah on this wonderful achievement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Fred Roger's quote, "Life is for service," describes Bill Saunders.

In 1940, at age 19, Bill enlisted in the British Royal Navy to fight for King and country, and served until 1946, liberating POWs. He served at

Portsmouth, England, Gibraltar, Australia and on the first ship to liberate Hong Kong.

A member of the Royal Canadian Legion, St. John's Branch 1 since 1949, Bill is the main reason the branch exists. He helped build the legion and nail the nails. Bill served as the branch's Sergeant-at-Arms for 51 years and was still a trustee of the branch at age 98, two years ago.

Bill is deeply respected by his legion comrades, who describe him as a father figure. He doesn't waste words, but willingly shares his knowledge, helps out or offers friendly advice. One member said: "He can educate a person."

He and his wife Brenda, a war bride, were married 70 years until her passing in 2014. They have three children and three grandchildren. Presently, he resides at the Caribou Memorial Veterans Pavilion, where he still enjoys his life-long passion of reading.

I ask Members to join me in honouring Bill Saunders and his service to his country and his community.

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: Speaker, yesterday marked the beginning of Safety and Health Week – a continent-wide event spanning Canada, the United States and Mexico – which focuses on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace, at home and in the community.

Last week, I had the privilege of attending an event to recognize the National Day of Mourning. The event had a powerful message, reminding us safety is everyone's responsibility.

In the last five years, 140 workers in this province lost their lives as a result of workplace incidents and occupational disease. This is unacceptable.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a right to safe, incident-free work environments, and this is why Digital Government and Service NL continues to engage with employers, workers and labour groups to enhance safety practices.

Working together, we enforce strong safety standards, increase safety awareness and ensure adequate safety training in workplaces throughout our province.

Speaker, we all have a responsibility to promote health and safety. Renewing our commitment to safe and healthy work environments help ensure that we can all return home to our friends and family at the end of the day.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the entire Official Opposition caucus to recognize and reflect upon the importance of Safety and Health Week.

I echo the minister's statement that is unacceptable that 140 workers in this province have lost their lives in workplace incidents or occupational disease in the past five years.

While we remember those who have been injured or killed on the job, I'd also like to thank and recognize the many health and safety officials who strive every day to make workplaces as safe as possible. I also encourage these professionals to keep pushing for safety standards and awareness.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. All employees deserve to work in safe and healthy environments, yet 140 workers lost their lives in this province in the last five years. We take this opportunity to call on government to hold neglectful companies and supporting management responsible for workplace injuries to stricter fines and jail sentences for those who endanger the lives of their employees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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: Speaker, I've spent the last few weeks meeting with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians throughout the province. I've heard again and again, people are worried about the soaring cost of living and crumbling health care. They believe action is long overdue, but they do not believe the Premier is listening. They're not sure he really gets how much they are suffering.

Premier, long-term plans are one thing, but what level of suffering in our population will it take before you act to relieve the pressure people are feeling today?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

I had an opportunity myself over the last two weeks to travel around the province. In fact, the minister and I were down in Harbour Breton just recently talking about health care and the needs of health care in that region, Mr. Speaker.

Opposite from what the Member opposite has said, I have heard that they actually think we are listening. They understand the challenges that

they face, but they appreciate that we have a vision going forward.

We do need acute solutions and we've been working with the NLMA. We've been working with the College of Family Physicians of Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, today, I had a healthy meeting with them to introduce the new ADM responsible for physician recruitment and retention across the province, Dr. Megan Hayes, a rural family physician who understands the challenges that those physicians face and we're moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

We understand the anxieties that are out there and we're planning to address them, short, medium and long term.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

We're hearing from all corners of this province, including the minister's district, that there is a need for health care, there's a crisis in health care and very little is being done to address the needs in health care right now.

I listened to numerous examples of how people are struggling with the high cost of living and not getting access to the health care they need. Many are losing hope and wondering if they're going to have to pack up and leave. Smoke-and-mirrors photo ops are not going to distract people from the hardships they are facing.

I ask the Premier: When will you park the photo op and take meaningful action to help the people of this province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

There was more than a photo op we had. It was fulsome conversations. We met with front-line workers and nurses who are running the health care facility in the Connaigre Peninsula. We met

with the council of mayors in the Connaigre Peninsula. We understand the anxieties that they are facing. They want to work with us, with the NLMA, with the physician recruitment and retention officer, the new ADM, to ensure that they are getting the health care requirements that they need.

On top of that, I think it is worthwhile remembering what we're already doing. We are acting on some of the Health Accord documents, Mr. Speaker, like providing new collaborative care clinics; expanding recruitment incentives, like providing \$100,000 to new graduates and a guaranteed salary to new graduates; increasing the number of graduating health care professionals, LPNs, PCAs, nurses and it goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Hopefully, we can address that in the next question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, you and your minister have had seven years of conversation: It's time to have some actions here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: I correct that: two and seven to make some actions happen.

Speaker, last week we heard the heartbreaking story of a little boy who did not receive the health care he needed in Central Newfoundland. The little boy had a ruptured appendix and it took a flight to Alberta's Children's Hospital to receive potentially life-saving health care.

I ask the Premier: What do you say to this 10-month-old little boy and his family?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Obviously, when individuals don't receive the health care that they expect and are entitled to, it's always a cause of concern. One of the things over the last seven years that we have brought in was the *Patient Safety Act*. There is a quality assurance process, which the regional health authorities will follow and are following in this instance after the child returned home.

As far as the issue of professional practice is concerned, however, medicine, nursing and the like are self-regulating professions. I would encourage anyone who feels that they have not received the standard of care that they are entitled to from a licensed health professional to submit their claim through that process. It's free and confidential and no cost to themselves.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

That is alarming when you hear the minister talking about health care that people expect. This is not about what people expect; this is what people need to keep them alive, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: The mother of this little boy said, and I quote her: "Newfoundland is my home province and I feel so let down. 'Come home year' advertisements certainly strike a different cord now. I don't know how I'll ever be willing to travel with my boys there again, for the fear of them" not being able to access needed health care if anything were to happen.

I ask the Premier: How can families planning a trip home this summer have confidence in our health care system should they need to avail of it in an emergency?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

Certainly, we are sympathetic to the plight of the family that the Member opposite is describing

and we wish a speedy recovery to the child that is in question.

We are continuing to recreate the health care system to meet the demands, not only of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians today but indeed the future. Mr. Speaker, we recognize change comes with acute challenges. That is why we have laid out, I believe ahead of other provinces, the Health Accord NL. People are looking to us now as a roadmap of how to reimagine and reinvent their health care system.

All it takes is a quick Google search of CBC or any of the news outlets across the country to look and see how many family physicians are absent across the country; there are a million in BC; there is 25 per cent in Quebec.

We understand that there are challenges here but we need to look at the context of the market of family physicians and sought after health care professionals around the country, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

The people availing of health care and those diligent employees in our health care system need action now; not long-term plans, not down the road, they need action now to deliver a health care service the way we need them in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Every aspect of our health care system is feeling the effects of staff shortages. The head of cardiac surgery for Eastern Health is set to leave the position at the end of May, leaving just three surgeons to perform cardiac surgery at the Health Sciences Centre. That means a heavy workload for these dedicated professionals and a lengthy wait-list for heart surgeries in this province with one of the highest rates of cardiac disease.

I ask the Premier: How is this a sustainable situation?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We have anticipated some of these staffing challenges. Eastern Health has a collaborative MOU with the Ottawa Heart Institute. They are sending a rotation of a couple of senior surgeons to assist; we have stabilized the perfusionist issue, five out of six positions are now filled, with the sixth being actively recruited for. I will be meeting with Eastern Health in the course of coming days to discuss a wait-list management plan for those top priority patients and we will have answers for those individuals.

This is not something that we are sitting idly by, Mr. Speaker. It is being actively managed by the department, by Eastern Health, and with success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

We've waited seven years to have a plan to look at wait-lists. They didn't just happen overnight. They've been here for a number of years and particularly since this administration has taken over. It's time for action right now.

Speaker, people are not getting access to the care they need in our health care system. They are finding themselves better off getting on a plane and going to another province. Our health care system is no longer crumbling; it has collapsed.

I ask the Premier: After seven long years of responsibility for the state of the health care system, why do you still have confidence in your Minister of Health?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

Again, maybe we need a time machine here, but I haven't been here for seven years, but I'd like to highlight some of the issues that we've been –

do you know what? We're spending \$500 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER A. FUREY: Imagine what we could do for \$500 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER A. FUREY: How many nurses, how many doctors, how many new hospitals, year after year after year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can stand up here all day.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Let me take an opportunity to tell you what we are doing. We're doing new collaborative clinics throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. We're expanding the recruitment initiatives, Mr. Speaker, by new grads, offering them \$100,000 as an incentive. We're increasing the number of graduates in other health care professionals, like LPNs, nurses, advance-care paramedics. We're attracting other qualified health care professionals from around the world with an investment and attraction program through the nurses' college, Mr. Speaker.

We're increasing investments in physician services. We're making it easier to access mental health services using 811 and online and virtual and it goes on, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

You know, it's funny, we can hear Muskrat Falls from the Premier over here all day long, but when it comes to taking responsibility of his own government, the accountability is nowhere to be seen. Amazing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Speaker, on the last day this House sat before Easter Break, I asked about a man, Preston Pardy, from Central Newfoundland, who, at that point, had spent nine days waiting on a stretcher in a hallway in Grand Falls-Windsor.

Since that time, he spent two weeks in the Health Sciences Centre – 44 years old – waiting for cardiac surgery, which was cancelled multiple times due to staff shortages. Yesterday, we learned he is being sent to the Ottawa Heart Institute to finally get the surgery he desperately needs in another province.

I ask the Premier: What do you say to this man and his family, or to the many more like him who can't get the surgery when they need it right here in our own province?

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

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

I obviously can't speak to individual cases. We have and continue to use our relationship with the Ottawa Heart Institute to send out of province those people whose level of care exceeds the Health Sciences Centre's capacity to deliver. We have always done that. We need to do that. We are a small province.

We have stabilized the perfusionist issue. We have five out of six positions filled. We have a collaborative relationship to bring in cardiac surgeons and we have meetings set-up to plan an approach to that backlog of critical cases.

Mr. Speaker, this is not unique to this province. There are 35,000 people in Regina awaiting surgery.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you.

The minister has pointed out something: You can't speak to individual cases. That's the problem with government. You're not looking into individual cases and talking to these individual people, because then you'd know exactly where their heads are and what they need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Speaker, Preston's experience with the health care system was not acceptable. It should not take Ontario's health care system to give this gentleman the chance at a speedy recovery, or Alberta's to save a 10-month-old boy needing urgent care. Premier, if you listen to the people of our province, you would hear these similar stories as they're happening all around us.

I ask the Premier: What level of failure do you consider to be too much for a Health Minister, if this isn't it?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The challenges around health care and recruitment are not unique to this province. We've seen them coming. We have short-, medium- and long-term plans. The medium term involves \$30 million we announced last October to manage some of the recruitment challenges and to bring them on to a provincial perspective.

In Central Health, there are 14 physicians interested in going there in the short term. There are relief staff coming in the short term. We have 32 of 35 seats for the residency program in family medicine filled on the first iteration. According to CIHI, we have the highest retention of graduates of Memorial medical school compared with any other province except Quebec. We'll get first next year, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I will tell you what is unique about health care in this province: The fact that people have to pay to see a primary care provider.

In the last budget, there was over \$2 billion in savings in the salaried physician budget. That could have paid for 57,000 visits to nurse practitioners in this province. Instead, people of Newfoundland and Labrador are forced to pay out of their pocket and they continue to pay out of their pocket. It's just not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, on this past Thursday, I had a call from a senior in the minister's district who talked to me about the challenges he was having paying his fuel bill. He normally can only afford to order \$250 at a time. His oil company has talked to him now and told him they will not deliver unless he orders \$450 minimum. He doesn't have the money.

I ask the minister: Minister, what hope can you offer this senior in your district, and other seniors in this province, to offset some of these high costs? Will you implement a home heat rebate program?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

Indeed, these are challenging times. We're coming out of a pandemic. People have had a very difficult two years and now we have the global crisis in the Ukraine and the offing of that crisis is causing problems here at home, across the country and indeed around the world. We have a great deal of empathy. I know people are worried. That's why we had \$142 million worth of cost-of-living supports in the budget that we're discussing today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I asked about whether or not the government would implement a home heat program. I guess there's still no talk about that, however, there is hope.

On Friday, the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills said, and I quote: The intention of the federal government is to increase the price of fuels that is how, just like a syntax, you know that this is how you dissuade people from burning fuel and from creating carbon emissions.

I wonder does the Minister of Finance agree with that statement, and if so, will she roll back the 2.5-cent carbon tax increase and remove it by reducing her gasoline tax?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

The Member opposite would fully understand that the provincial gas tax, valued at about \$141 million, and as I've just indicated to this House, we are returning \$142 million to the people of the province. I think this is one of the first times in history of Newfoundland and Labrador that I can remember a government putting money back into people's pockets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I think it's very important. People are very, very concerned –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. COADY: I'm sorry, Speaker, the Members opposite are chirping at me and it's very hard to answer.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

S. COADY: It's very hard to answer a question when you're being interrupted.

But I will say this, Speaker, regarding the issue of the carbon tax; it is a federal government policy. They are the ones who have said to address climate change they are putting in place a carbon tax. That is the way the country is going, Mr. Speaker. It's not up to the provincial government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I believe the minister still has the opportunity to control her own gas tax, at least we hope so. When she introduced the carbon tax, she called it a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution. Apparently, it's a made-in-Ottawa solution.

The Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills gave us some hope because he was quoted as saying everything is on the table, when he was asked about what could be done to lower the cost of fuels.

I ask the Finance Minister: Can you detail to us what exactly is on the table that her colleague is talking about?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I will say to the Member opposite that he continues to ask about what we're doing to help people with the cost of living and I've detailed: we've cut our fees on motor vehicle registration; we've eliminated the tax on car insurance –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I keep getting interrupted so it's a little bit hard to answer the questions fluidly.

But I will say to the Member opposite that we have given back, as I said, \$142 million. The provincial gas tax collects \$141 million. So it is

completely offset by what we're doing to assist the cost of living.

Is there more? We're going to continue to look at what we can do. But we also have to invest in health care, in education and in safety.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I would suggest to the minister that in addition to her gasoline tax, she also collects sales tax of 10 per cent on every litre of gas that she hasn't factored into that equation. It's hidden in another column in her budget estimate and it's a significant amount of money.

She has a \$9-billion budget. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are severely impacted, right now, by the cost of home heating fuel and the price at the pumps. They have asked for help. This government continues to refuse to help them.

I ask the minister: Will you ask your officials to go back, amend your budget and find a way to offer rebates to the people of the province who really need it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: It is indeed unfortunate that the moment I rise to speak to the budget, Mr. Speaker, I have to allocate a billion dollars to address the cost of borrowing. Imagine what we could do with that money; imagine if I didn't have to allocate \$500 million to help offset the cost of Muskrat Falls, Speaker; imagine if I could use that money to help pay for health care and education and even lower again the cost of living that everyone in this province is feeling the effects from.

I can say to the Member opposite that we're very cognizant of the cost of living and the impact. We have given back the entire amount of the

provincial sales tax, just as Alberta's done; it's equivalent, Speaker. I don't know if the Member opposite is aware of that; the amount of money that Alberta is giving back on a per capita basis is the same as Newfoundland and Labrador is giving back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The excuse list keeps growing. I read in *The Telegram* last week it was 45, I guess we keep going.

Speaker, increase taxes but reduce access to services like health care. What a mess on this government's watch.

Last week, we learned the new long-term care homes in Central Newfoundland are delayed once again by serious life-safety issues. This is a month after facilities were officially opened by the Premier and the minister.

I ask the minister: When did he become aware of these latest delays? Before or after the ribbon was cut?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me begin by saying, I know the Leader of the Opposition referred to the Premier as having photo ops. Well, I believe that same Member has his campaign photo and logo on his vehicle, so I'd just like to make that clear in terms of photo ops.

In addressing the long-term care facilities and the question that the Member is asking – because it's an important one and it's important to the seniors and families in Central Newfoundland and Labrador – I'm frustrated. There are three proponents: the Department of TI, we have Central Health and we have the contractor.

We are frustrated. It's unfortunate that we're here now delayed with two other issues. But those two issues are being worked on to finally come to a resolve so we can get seniors in those homes and the service that is badly needed in Central Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition would probably have those decals painted over, only he can't afford to do it because he's trying to keep it full of gas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister again: When exactly did he learn about the issues with the water systems on uneven floors in the new long-term care homes in Central Newfoundland?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The water issue has been an ongoing issue. At this moment, we do not know exactly what the problem is but we are working on it. Professional engineers in the department are working on it and I'm hoping to have more information on that in the coming days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: But the flooring issue was identified after the ribbon-cutting ceremony. There was an operational readiness stage that happened and during that stage that was identified. There are 27 rooms of the 120 that we're dealing with. We're dealing with them. That will be rectified within the next week or so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: I appreciate the minister's response, Speaker, but this was part of the original 4,000 deficiencies. This all should have been done before you cut the ribbon. That's where I come from. You cut a ribbon, it's all ready to move in equipment and move in people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: This just doesn't pass to me, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, one can assume the Premier and the minister did this a month ago when they smiled for the cameras, or they should have known. Either way, there were thousands of deficiencies the government was aware of a year ago and still not fully rectified.

Will the minister finally stand in his place and apologize to the seniors in Central Newfoundland who are waiting for these beds? Ultimately, they're the ones who are losing out.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what we're smiling about: We're investing in seniors in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, in Central Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: We do projects over on this side. We're getting it done. Unlike your administration that couldn't get projects done, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: But we'll be happy in the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker, hopefully that these issues will be resolved. The need is there for the seniors. I've talked to the CEO of Central Health, they're longing for this to happen and so are we. We'll get it done within the next couple of weeks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, the seniors in Central Newfoundland don't think they're getting it done. They are the ones who we are listening to right now and they're suffering. So the minister can say that all he wants, but the people don't believe it.

Speaker, the minister's deflecting with smoke and mirrors does nothing to alleviate the critical bed shortage in Central Newfoundland, where acute care beds are occupied with seniors waiting for these facilities to open. His department has done an abysmal job on managing this project and residents are now paying the price.

Can the minister table an updated report of the other 4,000 deficiencies his department oversaw?

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

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear as well, there is more than just the Department of Transportation that's involved in the process here. We have a contractor and I have been frustrated with the contractor as well, no doubt about it. I've been frustrated with the process as well.

I even had conversations with the staff that we need to have conversation even when this project is over to find if we can do something that can make it more efficient. So I'm willing to do that. But we are happy that we're investing and, as I said before, we have 120 long-term care beds that we'll be happy to move those seniors in the homes, medical staff to provide the services and there will be smiles on everyone's faces.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

The three-year Autism Action Plan was scheduled to be fully implemented by March of this year, 2022. However, many families on the Burin Peninsula are still struggling to access supports for persons with autism.

I ask the minister: When will the three-year Autism Action Plan be fully implemented?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Autism Action Plan is a key development in moving people away from diagnosis-based support to what they need to do to support their activities of daily living. The Action Plan was rolling out on time, and then COVID arrived, Mr. Speaker.

Eighty-five per cent of the time of those policy people involved in the implementation of the Action Plan was taken up with COVID. That now, fortunately, is on the wane, thanks to the efforts of Public Health. As that happens, we will be in a position to reboot the process and I actually had a briefing on that about 10 days ago.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Speaker, we started off with a five-year autism plan and that didn't work. Now we have a three-year autism plan that's not being implemented. I say to the minister, focus on something and get something done with it, please.

The people of Arnold's Cove are very concerned that the only doctor in the community will soon retire, leaving residents without any access. The town has even offered to construct a facility to attract a new doctor or a nurse practitioner.

I ask the minister: Will he support this plan and give his personal attention to recruiting a new primary care provider for the area?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm aware of the retirement of that individual who has served the community for a long time. I do know that Eastern Health has actually been in discussion with the mayor of Arnold's Cove, among other places in that area, to discuss what they, as communities, feel their needs are and he's working towards it.

I, along with the Premier, this morning, met with the College of Family Practitioners and with our new ADM who will be taking up post in the not-too-distant future, whose responsibility is recruitment and retention. The college are committed to working with government to support these initiatives. Thirty-two out of 35 of our family medicine residencies for this year are filled and our retention rate is second only to Quebec. We want to make it the best and we will do in the near future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

In a news article published today, the briefing notes of the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality state – I quote – proactive pay equity legislation can be costly, operationally complex, involve significant legal battles and result in only minor and unmeaningful adjustments for a limited number of women. Really?

I ask the minister: Does she stand by this briefing note?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member, of course, for raising this important topic. As we all know, it is

important and doesn't get enough attention – all matters pertaining to women.

Again, the work is ongoing, of course. We know back as far as the '80s, Mr. Speaker, the discussion has been ongoing about legislation with regard to pay equity, but we also can't get it confused with the gender wage gap, as we know. I'll look no further than the Province of Ontario where they have both the public and private sector pay equity legislation, but they have one of the largest gender wage gaps in the country.

But we are doing concrete things here to get women in the workforce and to support women and gender-diverse people. One comes to mind, of course, is the \$15-a-day daycare, which was implemented in 2022 and we're even looking to bring \$10-a-day daycare for January 2023, which is going to significantly help and knock down these concrete barriers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Only minor and unmeaningful adjustments for a limited number of women. Really?

Speaker, this minister says that her government is taking action against gender inequality by introducing a \$10-a-day child care.

First, I would like to ask the minister: Is she implying that child care is solely the responsibility of the woman? Why else would she be engaging in such stereotypical, sexist rhetoric?

Secondly, in this province, early childhood educators are 97 per cent women and making medium income of less than \$30,000 a year. So how does the minister propose to address the issue of pay inequity in the fields dominated by women and gender-diverse individuals – really?

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

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

Again, I thank the hon. Member. It's good to see she's fired up finally about issues pertaining to women and gender-diverse people here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Not only are we, of course talking about – there are also employment plans. My office is involved with negotiating projects for women's employment plans. We can't forget the GPA+ lens, which was implemented by this government in 2021 to put a mandatory lens on all policies and budgets produced, of course, by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to help mitigate the negative impacts on gender.

Work is ongoing. We know this problem didn't happen overnight and it's certainly not going to be solved overnight. Again, it goes back as far as the '80s.

I certainly welcome the Member to come over to my department any time and also to show up actually at the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity. We can certainly use your voice there at that table, which we're planning our third meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The federal Liberal government managed to see the importance of anti-replacement worker legislation for federally regulated industries in the supply and confidence deal with the federal NDP.

I ask the minister: Now will this government follow the lead of their federal counterparts and table anti-replacement worker legislation that is much needed in this province?

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

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

As the hon. Member knows – he’s asked this question on occasion before – I fully understand his questioning. As we’ve always said, we look at opportunities to look at the legislation. You don’t have to look any further than the *Highway Traffic Act* and other things we’ve done that changed over time.

As things evolve, we make those changes. Anything with respect to legislation, we always look for the best available processes and we’re going to continue to do that. I thank the hon. Member for bringing it to the forefront again here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party. A quick question, no preamble, please.

J. DINN: That’s going to be a challenge, Speaker.

The leaders, Speaker, of all three political parties in PEI have signed a letter asking the federal government to work with the province to introduce a province-wide basic income guarantee.

I ask the Premier: When will his government establish the all-party Committee on basic income as called for in our private Member’s resolution that was passed unanimously not once, but twice in this House of Assembly.

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

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

Certainly, the whole concept of basic income has gotten a lot of attention in this province, in PEI and across the country. We’re looking at the research that other provinces have done, including BC. We’re developing some policy options for government.

As far as the Committee goes, I will leave that to the House Leaders to determine when and if that Committee is put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling 12 orders-in-council relating to funding for pre-commitments for fiscal years ’22-’23 to ’33-’34.

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

I have one.

As required under section 31 of the *Auditor General Act, 2021*, I hereby table the 2022 *Atlantic Provinces’ Joint Follow-up of Recommendations to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation*.

Secondly, as required under section 51 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I am pleased to table the annual report of the House of Assembly Management Commission for the 2020-21 fiscal year.

Any other tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Life Insurance Act, Bill 55.

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

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, Bill 56.

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

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Savings Plans Act And The Pension Plans Designation of Beneficiaries Act, Bill 57.

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Urban And Rural Planning Act, 2000, Bill 58.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice to move the following private Member's resolution:

WHEREAS the cost-of-living crisis that is making life unbearable for countless Newfoundland and Labrador individuals and families is worsening by the day, to such a degree that it requires urgent relief measures beyond those included in the government's 2022 budget plan; and

WHEREAS during this Mental Health Week we must recognize that the cost-of-living crisis is contributing to stress, anxiety and mental health issues for many people, and action must be taken with greater urgency to ensure people get financial relief as well as improved access to the long-term mental health care they need without enduring excessive wait times;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge the government to provide immediate relief measures beyond those included in the government's 2022 budget plan, including

financial relief along with measures to improve access to mental health care.

This is seconded by the Member for Topsail - Paradise and it will be debated on May 4, 2022.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that on tomorrow I will move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 3, 2022.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on tomorrow I will move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 4, 2022, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business, and if not adjourned the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that on tomorrow I will move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 on Thursday, May 5, 2022.

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

B. PETTEN: The motion read in by my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port will be the private Member's resolution, which will be debated this coming Wednesday by the Official Opposition.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition calling on the House of Assembly to urge government to reform the justice system to better serve survivors of sexual assault. It's a petition that I presented before in this House. This one is a petition that's signed by the students and staff of Crescent Collegiate in Blaketown.

What the petitioners are calling for in this is an acknowledgement that the status quo is failing survivors of sexual assault; that we undertake a review of the K-to-12 curriculum to identify gaps in education about consent, healthy relationships and gender-based violence; to implement alternative justice options such as transformative/restorative justice practices and/or options rooted in Indigenous legal traditions and practices in response to gender-based violence throughout the province; to have the Minister of Justice ask the chief judge of the Provincial Court to consider a practice directive which would prohibit opposing counsel from approaching witnesses and which would prohibit counsel from yelling at witnesses; to introduce mandatory training for provincial judges on trauma, PTSD and consent modelled on the federal requirement; and to consult with key community stakeholders to identify and appropriately fund new initiatives to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence.

Mr. Speaker, the Me Too Movement has laid bare the gross inequalities and obstacles facing survivors of sexual assault who seek justice. In what other crime that's committed against you are you asked if you said no or if you gave consent? Do you get it if you're robbed? Are you asked: Well, did you try to stop them or did you say no? But that is the case that survivors of sexual assault are subjected to.

The people who put forward this petition have serious concerns about how the justice system handles criminal offences related to sexual violence and the evidence based on statistics about the reporting of sexual assault in relation to other crimes. These concerns also emerged from the reported experiences of survivors.

The fact is what the authors of this petition are looking for is a system that treats the survivors of sexual assault – not the victims but the survivors; the people who have gone through this – with dignity and that provides justice for them and for all.

Thank you.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition. The background of this petition is as follows:

Roads in our province are in various states of disrepair. Many rural communities are concerned that the deplorable road conditions will keep visitors and family away from Come Home Year celebrations. We are inviting the world to come to our province this summer, yet many rural roads are unfit for travel and many vehicles are damaged by huge potholes, unrepaired washouts and uneven shoulders. This is a real deterrent to tourists and family members from out of province who wish to join our celebrations this summer.

Therefore we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the Provincial Roads program budget to address the need for repairs to many rural roadways in our province.

I met with the town council of Chance Cove and they are well renowned now, obviously, since COVID came in. They are a great success story with their hiking trail and right now, the trail is in better shape than the road to get there.

I noticed on the way in, coming back to reassemble here at the House, half the sign on Route 1 is gone. It's not even there; not even a

piece of board. It's not like it's tore up or the paints moved or anything like that. It's gone.

Like I said, it seems to be that Come Home Year celebrations are left to the towns in the rural side, but there is going to be a lot to do. Apparently, in St. John's and urban centres, they got a lot of roadwork in the last few years since I've been here, I can tell you that.

In the meantime, there has been such neglect for so many years that it just makes no sense that we would even want to invite anybody. It is like inviting somebody into your house and telling them to lift your leg if you can get in. But people don't keep their house like that. They keep their house in better repair; therefore, we should keep our house in better repair, especially outside the Overpass.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The petition is to increase the supports for Labrador West seniors. The reasons for the petition:

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

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

WHEREAS the means of increasing the numbers of senior residents in Labrador West to happily age in place are not currently available to the region.

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

It's no surprise. It's been in the media. I have talked about it dozens and dozens of times in this House, seniors in Labrador West don't have the same access to care and housing or anything like that, that any other region in this province currently has available to them. We have a very limited number of long-term care beds and long-term care is usually for those who are in advanced state of aging that require (inaudible).

There are seniors that just need home care that can't get it. There are seniors that need an assisted-living facility that are still able to participate in the community and just want to live in comfort with the access to everything that everyone else has.

Right now seniors are just asking to have the same access to care that every other region of this province has access to. There is no assisted-living facility. There is very limited home care offered. There are only 12 beds in long-term care and there is a wait-list for that.

Seniors in Labrador West are just asking for the same thing that everyone else in this province enjoy. And that's all they ask. This is something that reports were written in the early 2000s about, that Labrador West will have a boom of a group of aged individuals very rapidly. Unfortunately, it was ignored, the advice was ignored from the people that did the report and now we're at a point where we have a significant amount of seniors looking for access to home care, assisted-living facilities and just those basic needs that are not available right now.

It has come to a point now where they are being told, unfortunately, you have to leave the community. And there are only two options: either go to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, which they themselves actually have a bit of a wait-list and stuff for home care and for assisted living as well, or Corner Brook. Most of the residents of my community have little to no family in Corner Brook; they may have lived there years ago –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

With a population in excess of 6,000 people in the Bonavista area, there is a severe shortage of child care options for young families, young working families, which is leading to absences from employment and deep frustration that is being expressed far and wide.

We petition the hon. House of Assembly and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately address the regulated child care facilities in the Bonavista area by being more responsive to the proposals already submitted and creative with underutilized spaces that already exist within the current K-to-12 school system.

Child care is a big issue in the District of Bonavista and it may be in other areas, but we're talking about over 6,000 people that would be in that immediate area. Many young families that work in health care in Bonavista, which, again, we deem to be in a crisis, which the Premier would say that the system is broken. Many of these young workers with young family members cannot find child care.

What happens is that they must stay home to look after their child in the absence of being able to provide a provider in the Bonavista area. And it is an issue. I've checked on it to know that, within the health care delivery system, this is an intricate part of being able to maintain the health care system in the Bonavista area. We hear of people in the health care system planning on leaving because of the lack of child care.

We have two proposals currently in to the department. Either one of these two proposals are quite viable. What we need is an emphasis on making sure that one or both materialize in order to provide the much-needed child care within the Bonavista area.

I would think the petition was started and, within two days, we had close to 60 signatures, which would indicate that it is an issue within the area. So what we'd ask is for government to look at it. If they need any assistance from the Bonavista area, or the MHA that would be in that area, as far as connectivity, then by all means let's start the conversation and let's make it happen.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance.

I wish to make the following motion:

THAT because the cost-of-living crisis that is making life unbearable for countless Newfoundland and Labradorian individuals and families is worsening a rapid pace; and

Because the relief measures that government has brought forward are not adequate to address the people's increasing need for relief; and

Because there's no signal that government intends to bring forward additional relief measures, beyond those already announced; and

Because Members of the House have brought forward relief options that are not in the budget and that should be debated immediately to determine the merits of implementing them immediately, and

Because action is needed now and no more time can be lost;

I move that the business of the House be adjourned to hold an emergency debate on urgent relief measures that will more adequately address the cost-of-living crisis that is worsening in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This motion is seconded by the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

SPEAKER: Are there any quick comments on this before we take it under review?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: No, I have to review it first. We'll review it to see if it's in order and everything.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say, for the record, I certainly commend the hon. Member and the Official Opposition for bringing this forward. There's no doubt that the measures that were taken by government in the budget, while there's no doubt that it does address a portion of the population, the bottom line is that the average working person is feeling the brunt of the soaring gas prices, heating prices and so on.

I'm hearing from people on a regular basis. I had somebody say to me yesterday: I had to take part-time job to pay for the gas to go into my car in order to go to my full-time job. I know it was a bit tongue-in-cheek, but it really sort of speaks to the fact of – I know it does sound funny, I suppose, to some degree, but it does speak to where we are. It is a crisis; therefore, I would certainly support the Official Opposition on this motion.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

This House will recess to review the special measures order under Standing Order 36.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

Before I make my ruling, I would like to recognize that the Member for Conception Bay South has notified me of his motion under Standing Order 36 as required.

In this matter, I will be guided by the ruling of Speaker Hodder in the House of Assembly on

April 22, 2004, where he based his analysis on the urgency of the debate by Members of the House, rather than the urgency of the matter. This is confirmed in various parliamentary texts, including *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia*, 4th edition, page 86, where it says: urgency has consistently been interpreted as urgency of debate, not urgency of the subject matter.

While I recognize that this issue is ongoing and is affecting many people in our province, Members have other parliamentary opportunity to ask questions of government regarding this matter. These include the ongoing debate of the budget, or during this week's private Member's motion, which has been already given notice earlier today.

The matter of urgency of debate in the House today, which would supersede all business of the House, has not been established. Therefore, I'm ruling that this matter not proceed under Standing Order 36.

Order please!

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Motion 1, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Keeping my eye on the time now, but it looks like my time is already up. Okay, there it is. Short and sweet.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Always good to speak on behalf of the residents of the District of Bonavista. I do want to talk about the budget, which I will, but I just want to deviate and just have a few comments that

would be outside that before I would get into the details.

On April 12, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development had welcomed me back to the House after a period of illness. He said: Maybe at some point and time when you speak, you can address about your experiences. I thought that would probably be a good place to start, just to share my experiences and, I think, experiences with the health care system.

Diagnosed with cancer in December, which was a bit of a bombshell for a lot of people to handle, but I waited to see until I knew that surgery would have to be forthcoming. That occurred in early March.

To the question that was posed by my hon. minister on the other side, I would think that the services that were received within the Health Sciences complex and in particular Dr. Michael Organ and his team with urology – exceptional.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would say, whether I look at a good friend of mine that was in for a cardiac procedure from Trinity Bay North that went in with the physician who is leaving the Health Sciences complex, Dr. Daniel Lodge; he raved about the treatment he had on his cardiac care with Dr. Lodge. My next-door neighbour had a cardiac procedure and raved about the professionalism and the skill set of those that worked on him in the health care system.

Nobody ever questions the professionalism and the skill set of those working within the health care system in our province. But we do have a broken system in the sense that sometimes, like my friend in Trinity Bay North, he was over a year waiting to get access to cardiac surgery. I know it's prioritization, but he was pretty well housebound; cautious as to what he did. His lifestyle had come to a stop and he had to wait.

So while the health care was fantastic and phenomenal, the amount of time in accessing – and we know in health care it is accessing the family physician. There are many in the District of Bonavista that don't have access to a family physician and they struggle and the continuity of care has got to be impacted with them.

I want to give a shout out to an information specialist at the Legislative Library, a public servant by the name of Andrea Hyde. If you can recall, last year, I talked about a young girl from Bonavista, 14 years old – I referred to her as Janey Phillips – who was heading down to Cable John gulch in Spillars Cove when she bent over to tie-up her shoelace and she ended up about 110 feet over a jagged cliff on the beach below in the gulch where there was all kinds of large boulders, but she never had a scratch.

I know that when I heard it from Rick Street in Spillars Cove, I wondered as to whether it was true. I heard many in the family say, yes, it was, they heard mom talk about it. But thanks to Andrea Hyde, we found the newspaper article from *The Evening Telegram* on July 11, 1936, with a picture of Janey Phillips, which was deemed Lizzie Phillips at the time, and what had happened.

So I just wanted to give a shout out to her; that is great, it validates that story. If ever you're down in the Bonavista area and you visit the community of Spillars Cove by the side of Bonavista, a short distance, check out Cable John gulch and just look at that magnificent – we'll say – piece of geography that's there and have a look at the cliff that she went over and you too would be amazed.

We recently had two budget conversations in the District of Bonavista. At 3 on Saturday afternoon, we hosted a session at the Lions Club in Bonavista, which was well attended. We had another one in the Lethbridge area at 7 that night, which was well attended. And we listened. We listened to what the people had stated and any questions they had that we can answer, we certainly did.

We just requested an emergency debate on the cost of living. I would say to you, based on those two sessions, we heard from lots of people stating that they are in a tough position in our district. We are one of 40. I would say many districts would be the same, if not all.

We struggle with the cost of living and we know that we have inflationary pressures that would be on us, but coupled to that would be the astronomical cost of fuel. And one thing that sometimes we as decision-makers forget, if we

have complex medical needs in Bonavista – complex medical needs – your first stop will be Clarenville, a three-hour journey up and back. If they don't handle it in Clarenville, it is then to the Health Sciences complex in St. John's. And this is the life and times of those people who have to access health care in rural, remote areas if they have complex needs. I would say any travel to and from St. John's now for a variety of reasons for those people, especially on the tip of the peninsula, is very challenging for them.

One gentleman stated his wife was a cancer patient. He spent over \$500 going in for radiation treatment, having to stay in St. John's in a hotel and knowing where she had radiation he couldn't be with her and they had to be in separate rooms. But \$500-plus for him was what he had spent on accessing health care for his wife.

These are rural Newfoundland, real-life situations that as we amalgamate health care, as we amalgamate schools, as we find that food outlets may be more expensive than others that would be in larger populations, these people have to travel. At this point in time, it is very, very costly.

My wife who is very apolitical, in fact, she doesn't say a whole lot about politics, and chances are she's not listening right now. Chances are nobody would tell her that I stated her name, but I came home one time and she said – and called me by name – I'm sick and tired of hearing about Muskrat Falls. Then she states: Well, isn't that the crew who were responsible for the Upper Churchill? I said we've got a statute of limitations, where, listen, the past is the past, what you've got, you make the most of it and you work with it. So we blame things on Muskrat Falls and we look at Muskrat Falls.

I would say to you the Upper Churchill comes back to us in 2041. Some speculate that it will be between \$800 million and \$1.2 billion under today's prices that would be in our coffers when that does come back to us. That's a significant asset that we have to look down the road. One thing the people in the District of Bonavista discussed are these issues. I throw them out.

When I ran in the 2019 election, I had understood that the cost of a provincial election in Newfoundland and Labrador was \$5 million. In fact, Bruce Chaulk had told me it was \$5 million, because I wanted to verify that it was – generally \$5 million. If he does not know in Elections NL when the date of the election is, the election increases by a little over a million dollars. The election cost goes a little over \$6 million when we don't have a set date.

The election in 2021, during a pandemic, that was called, was a little over \$8 million taxpayers' dollars. I would say, I would be an advocate of having fixed date for elections because that would be a bold move to say let's have a fixed date. Let's make sure that we only pay the least amount of taxpayers' money for an election that we have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: This particular government who talks about Muskrat Falls, well, when they got into power in 2021, they expanded their Cabinet. And I would say to you, there's nothing wrong with the portfolios that you have and the issues that you would deem important. But when we're looking at a province that would be in the financial shape that we're in, I would say poor judgment on expanding your Cabinet in 2021, when we had people that could have picked up portfolios. It wasn't the time to increase the portfolio.

The minister had mentioned some time ago when I talked about the poverty reduction strategy, he referenced Manitoba. We said after, well, probably one of the ones that's on the record as having the most impact in the country was the one in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2006. The one in 2006, if you picked up that strategy, Google it on your phone, you'll find out that everyone who drove that plan and that successful strategy in our country were Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Every one of them, they were either public servants or they sat in the Cabinet of Newfoundland and Labrador. They did the work.

So when I go into the District of Bonavista, they'll say, that's not this government's process

or rule of thumb. We always farm outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, as if we didn't have the capability within our own province. The latest one would be the Rothschild, \$5 million, said many times. The McKinsey report, \$1 million. We want to look at the health scheduling system that we couldn't get a handle on. So we farmed that out for \$25-plus million.

Now, I would say to you that those are choices that you have made in governance that many of the residents in Newfoundland and Labrador – I know the ones in the District of Bonavista – would question to say: Is that really necessary? We have more than capable individuals to be able to steer whatever plan that you would think to be necessary in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are here. We don't need to export our taxpayers, the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, their dollars outside the province.

I stated that they voiced their opinion on Saturday past and state that they're finding it tough. I would think they're not appreciative of the sugar tax that would be coming in, because that's going to be another tax regardless of where it's destined for – if it's going to pay \$1 million at Kids Eat Smart, we've always paid Kids Eat Smart, because it's such a valuable asset and they do some great work within the kids. In fact, if you want a bold move, I would say we feed all the children in Newfoundland and Labrador. How about that? The only thing I would say, those are actions that I don't think you would have many people complaining about.

The sugar tax pulls more money out of people's pockets. Regionalization will take more money out of people's pockets. Regardless of the value it gives them, you are going to instill a property tax in the most rural parts of this province where they'll have to pay more on top of a highly inflated economy and a highly inflated cost of travel to get from rural Newfoundland to where the services are.

There comes a point in time where you have to say now is not the time. When I say the sugar tax, in my short time remaining, there is research out – and when we did the debate on the sugar tax, we are the only ones in Newfoundland and Labrador taxing sugar; nowhere else in the country. I think we all agree that when we do

legislative amendments, basically the other nine provinces and territories almost have to be there by the time we adopt it and roll it out in Newfoundland and Labrador. But we're on the cutting edge with the sugar tax.

The University of Alberta would say it's the wrong approach. The article is here – if had a little more time, I would share with you what the researchers would state. It's the wrong approach. Sugar consumption is an issue, no doubt about it. In Newfoundland and Labrador, it's an issue. The research in the University of Alberta would say taxing sugar drinks is not the problem because the sugary drinks account for significantly less than 17 per cent of the sugar consumption that we've got in our province. Keep in mind, those that are having trouble making ends meet now, many of them are going to be asked to pay more for a sugar tax on their drinks.

One thing I want to mention about the 2006 Poverty Reduction Strategy is that in that strategy they talked about the Canadian Tire Jumpstart foundation. I'm not sure who's aware of the Canadian Tire Jumpstart foundation. I know as an administrator at Clarenville Middle School did we ever utilize that foundation. Did it ever put children who couldn't afford it in organized sport? It put them in activities with their colleagues who could afford it. If you weighed the Canadian Tire Jumpstart foundation and you weighed that against your initiative, which would be the Physical Activity Tax Credit, no comparison. The Canadian Tire Jumpstart puts in about \$1.5 million every year annually. I'm not sure if government puts in anything now to the Canadian Tire Jumpstart.

We have 21 per cent of our youth live in poverty – 21 per cent. Twenty-five per cent, who are six years of age and less, and the only thing I would say to you, Canadian Tire Jumpstart serve them. If any of you were involved with physical activities or in activities, many of you may be aware that that did a lot for a lot of the children in Newfoundland and Labrador. So I would say cancel the sugar tax, let your government who cancelled the Canadian Tire Jumpstart reactivate that and let's do something –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – that’s a little more impactful for the children in Newfoundland and Labrador than what we’re doing.

I want to state my support for Bill C-251 that’s before the House of Commons now, and that one is presented by MP Clifford Small from Coast of Bays–Central–Notre Dame. The title of the bill, which will become law if supported by your Liberal cousins: Conservation of Fish Stocks and Management of Pinnipeds Act. Pinnipeds are your seals and the other predators in our oceans.

We support it and I look forward to the next speaking engagement where I think I’m going to dedicate it to the fishery, and that I look forward to.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O’DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Great job there, Member.

First of all, I’d like to say it’s a privilege to stand up and be able to represent the District of Ferryland. It’s certainly a pleasure and I thank the people again for electing me in and I certainly do appreciate it.

A couple of things I’m going to touch on today. One is I got a text from a gentleman and I didn’t print the date, but it was on my phone and I went back to check it. I didn’t want to be taking my phone out while I am speaking in the House of Assembly, so I said I would print it off and I should have checked the date. Well, it probably could be on this, but I am not going to look for it.

When he bought fuel, he bought 500 litres. He runs a company. At that time, it was \$1.62 a litre so that was only a couple of weeks ago, I suppose, or three weeks ago. At that time, he bought 500 litres of fuel. It cost him \$1,111.61. Of that: federal excise tax, \$19.98; provincial fuel, \$82.43; Newfoundland carbon tax, \$53.61;

HST, \$144.99. It totals up to \$301, three weeks ago.

And now it is probably twice – well, it’s not twice that, but I tell you now it’s an increase. He is texting me and saying it’s so hard to keep a business going. He’s got his own excavator, his own truck and he’s a small business. When he gets this charge of fuel, that’s just one fill-up. If he gets this charge of fuel, who is going to pay for his work? The person that’s getting their work done obviously got to pay for it, so his prices have to go up. That doesn’t stimulate the economy. Somehow, somewhere we have got to figure out how to stop this, how to get it back so people – that is definitely not stimulating the economy in this area. Definitely not.

I don’t know the answer and we’ve got some answers that we are throwing out there. We are throwing out the taxes that are coming in from the sugar tax. That’s one thing that we are throwing out there. You are asking them to come up with solutions; that’s one of them. And it’s not you just turn away.

So I’ll say this: I was on a council in Bay Bulls a long while ago, nine or 10 years ago. In order to talk about something, you had to put a motion to the floor, get it seconded and then you could debate it. I put a motion to the floor, got a seconder, debated it and we all had our turn speaking – just like we do here. Do you know what the problem I find in here is? That we don’t listen to each other is my problem with it. We don’t listen to each other. Listen, you can make a motion –

AN HON. MEMBER: I agree.

L. O’DRISCOLL: Totally – I finally get someone to agree with me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O’DRISCOLL: I am not saying it’s all wrong. I am not saying everything is wrong. That’s not what I am saying. What I am saying is that if you put a motion to the floor – and I did this. I’ll go back to where I started. I put a motion to the floor and I got it seconded. When the motion was all said and done and everybody had their say, guess what I did? I voted against the motion. First time in history they said that

somebody put a motion to the floor and voted against my own motion.

But why did I do that? Because when I listened to other people talk about it, it made more sense. My motion – do you know what? When I listened to everybody and what they had to say, I decided that's not a good motion. I am going to vote against it, and that's what I did.

It was probably never done before, I don't know. The point I'm trying to make is, yes, you came out with legislation and then we come over here and debate it. We sit down and no matter what happens, it's 22 to 18. It doesn't matter if it's good or bad, it's 22 to 18. That's the way the vote is going to be because you came up with this great idea. But we have something to offer and you have lots to offer too, but we don't sit down and listen to each other, listen to some good points. Listen, you make good points as well as we do, but we're trying to help it a bit. I just don't see it.

We all get elected to come in – I sit here and listen to Muskrat Falls. He just spoke about it. Every time \$500 million gets thrown out, we're making a tick mark or we're making a remark. I can't let it go. I'm sorry I cannot let it go. It just boils me to no end. I wasn't here when it was voted on.

We were elected to come in and change that stuff, not to come in and continue throwing it down the road. We were elected to hopefully change that somehow. It's seven years, I think, since the Liberal government came in. I'm not here jumping on anybody. We're talking about that since I came here three years. The Premier said to me that he was only here two years today. Well, I'm only here three and I'm hearing Muskrat Falls since I got here.

So you're elected, you have seven years to get that stuff ironed out and try – it's not easy; there's no doubt about it. I'm in the same predicament you are, we have to deal with it, but we should deal with it together. There's no together, not in my mind anyway. Now, someone else can tell me something different, but not in my mind.

It just doesn't make any sense. We sit down here every single time and you know what? You keep

throwing it up; I'm not going to let it go. I'm going to be chirped; I'm going to be thrown out. Whatever is going to happen let it happen because I can't take it. It drives me crazy hearing fellows talk about it. All we need is a bit of collaboration. It's not that hard.

You have good ideas, we have good ideas and I think we could be better at that. We're elected here to do that. I'm just throwing it out there. Hopefully we can do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, don't throw me out yet. I have 14 minutes. I haven't said anything bad.

Two weeks ago when I was off – I did have COVID – I listened to it when I was home for that week. I did hear the Minister of Fisheries get on and say something to you about my colleague from Bonavista, that he wasn't out at the demonstration that the fishermen had. It's hard to take. He knew the difference. He should not have brought that in here; he knew the difference.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, and you know what? I didn't know until after. Listen, you're a team; we're a team. You cannot bring that up. If he told him about it, he should not be bringing that up in here, and we all know that. So hopefully he'll take care of that in his own regard.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I would expect if I did that to you guys, you'd certainly let me know and I'd certainly apologize right away. It's certainly something that shouldn't come up, but I think it's just something that had to be out there. We just have to be careful of what we're saying sometimes. I know we get heated, but you still can't let that happen.

When I was listening to him talking, I think he was reading my notes – some of the ones on the election, especially. We spent, like he said, \$5 million on an election, and because it was called so quick, that's \$3 million extra spent. Well, \$3 million can do a lot of stuff. We're looking for cataract surgeries out on the West Coast that's a

million dollars. That's something that could have been saved.

So if we have a date, then it's something that we should live by and honour it. That's why we put these rules in. Now, you're going to call one whenever you like. Strategically, it's going to be done. But if you're going to put a date there, this is the kind of stuff that you collaborate and call it and do it the way it's supposed to be done. You put that rule there for a reason. Now, we didn't do it; that was done – I'm going to say I don't know what government. I'm going to say the PC government or it could be Liberal. I'm not sure who brought that rule in.

AN HON. MEMBER: PC government.

L. O'DRISCOLL: PC government. Well, why not honour it? Let's get down and put a date and honour it and then you'll know where you're to. You're saving money. You want to save money?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, they try to, I suppose.

But it's an idea to save money. So you're looking at saving money. If you give them a fixed date, then we're saving money without having to do anything. Without having to tax anybody, without having to do anything, we can save them some money by giving a fixed date. Makes total sense to me. So I don't know why we wouldn't adapt to that, but there will be reasons for it or how the polls are go, or whatever it is. That's the way it goes.

I'm going to get back to my district a little bit. There is some positive stuff happening. I spoke to a tourist operator the other day. We had the issue coming up with Turo. There were some questions they are asking, just about having stuff ready and being prepared and speaking to the right people in the industry. He called me and he said, b'y, I hope you're not – I said we're not against tourists coming to this area, and certainly not against Come Home Year. I think it could have been a better year maybe next year, just because – we blamed everything on COVID, so why couldn't we just give it another year? Anyway, it's done now, we're going to move on and it's going to be celebrated. But we need to get people into this province.

It's something that we really have to do our homework on some of this stuff. We just throw stuff out there and hopefully it hits and sticks, but there was no homework done on this. In regard to the insurance industry, again, he called me, and again I told him we're not against people coming here. We would certainly love to see that. That's going to stimulate the economy again, and that's what the government should be doing. It certainly empowers what we should be trying to do for all the economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's something that we should be paying a little more attention to, instead of just jumping into stuff haphazardly and not doing all the homework on it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, no problem. That's what I certainly will. But when you throw the information out there, we're looking for answers. You haven't spoke to the insurance companies, so they're the first ones that should be involved. If you buy a car, you've got to have insurance on it. Then there's a secondary insurance that are offering liability. Are they paying \$2 million cash for a vehicle when they beat it up? Those are the questions you've got to know and who's going to cover it all. There are all kinds of questions – we'll certainly discuss it when we get to that. So that's where it's to.

I will deal with the ambulance issue in the district, up in Trepassey. I don't know how much more this Trepassey area and Portugal Cove South-St. Shott's can take. They've been hit so hard. I'm looking at the ambulance issue. So you take them from Trepassey, bring them to Cape Broyle, and they're sitting down there, they've got no one to man it. Now, I'm not saying that's the minister's fault, but he's had a report on his desk for five years on ambulances and now we're going to go to the Health Accord and institute what they're going to do, or try to do.

It's something that should be looked at. It's an area that's 200 kilometres away from here. It's 2½ hours if you're going to drive. You leave here today and it's 2½ hours to drive there. I get a text every second day or third day – we're in a red alert up here now, the ambulance is gone and

we're sitting out waiting to get into the Health Sciences or waiting to get into St. Clare's.

They're just stopped right there. They're in a red alert. So now you've got to get an ambulance that's got to drive either from Cape Broyle or from St. Mary's, going to be an hour away before some – and that time is of the essence, it's crucial. If somebody – certainly for a stroke victim a half hour or 45 minutes is as much as people can stand in that situation, and they need to get that drug in them to help them hopefully turn over the conditions of a stroke.

It's just so hard to understand how we don't see this. We're all 40 elected Members, how the people in your district – you don't see the trouble they're in. I know we hear it, but we've got to do something. We stand over here all the time and we talk about this, but it's like we don't know what's going on. It's like in this House, we're outside the realm – we have to see what's going on. You're getting it every day. I had another person call me yesterday that owns a small paving company. They've got 12 employees. But with the price of fuel, they're not sure they're going to start up.

So somebody tell me how we can't do something with the price of fuel. I know that it just can't change. I know it's regulated and all. We've got to be able to do something to help gas prices. We've just got to be able to do it, somehow. That's what we're elected to do, to figure this out. So you're telling me there are 12 more jobs, people that have got a company that's not going to run this year? To me, I don't know the answer, so who do I go to?

We're all sitting here listening; we're all trying to do our best. And we all know we're trying to do our best. We're all trying to represent the people that voted us in, there's no question about it, I don't doubt that for a second. But somehow, we have to get down to the grassroots of what's going on in this province, and we don't seem to do it.

We don't seem to do it.

Yes, \$142 million, you're throwing out numbers all over the place today in Question Period. It's right here where it affects you, in your own pocket. These people, in their own pocket are where it has affected.

Okay, the cost of registration is cut in half. Great. Do you know what? They can only afford to drive the car half the time now because of fuel prices. They can't go places.

I had someone say to me the other day, he's 75 – and we all live in – well, they all don't live in small communities, because small communities, you see everything that's going on in if you're in your own area, for sure. You see the locals that drive around, they drive around the harbour; you see them again in the afternoon, you see them again in the evening and they're driving around. He said, b'y, I can't drive around as much now. You go down to the wharf for a look or go up on the farm or you go to the supermarket. They're just going out driving around. But he has to think about what he's doing now before he goes anywhere. He's 75 or 76. That, to me, is shameful.

It was embarrassing to sit there and listen to. Not embarrassing, because it's not me. It's all of us together that should be able to solve this problem, all of us together, but there's no together. We're all representing individuals and we're not together. That's the way I feel, anyway. I'm sure that our colleagues over here are probably the same way. How can we get this fixed? It's just so frustrating.

I don't want to stand over here and spend 20 minutes talking about all the negativity, I like to have some positives. Like I said, there's lots of tourism in our area. We have Mistaken Point; we have the hotels that are going to be opened up; we have Airbnbs; we have boat tours; we have the Colony of Avalon; and the Ferryland Lighthouse. There's so much tourism in the area and it's so positive. There are so many people who go there.

An example would be just some of the regulations, so we got into the ATV regulations. Now they're supposed to come out in May. When we left here last year, we didn't have an agreement, but we sort of had an understanding, because I remember the Member from Humber - Bay of Islands.

AN HON. MEMBER: We thought we had an agreement.

L. O'DRISCOLL: We thought we had an agreement here that we'd come back and –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Wait until I finish, because that is where it started.

So we sit here and take it: we're going to do it in regulations. Do you know what? Doing it in regulations did nothing for anybody. Again, this is what I'm talking about. When you make a motion and you come in here and talk about it, we all gave our points of why it's not good in a Side By Side that's enclosed. We all had good points. I don't drive a Side By Side, let me make that clear, I might've been in one, but I don't drive them.

Then you get the example thrown back, well, cars are regulated and they're certainly safety tested and all that. Well, you can be safety tested all you like when you're in one with the sunroof off or a convertible and she goes bottom up in a ditch. So you have to wear a helmet now driving a car? Does that make sense? You're driving a convertible and she can go bottom up in a ditch the same as a Side By Side.

So to me, that's an example that's, yes, there's no doubt it's regulated. I was there for 22 years, worked in service, worked in sales. There's no question about it, it's regulated. But we had an agreement here that we get back and look at it, and Side By Sides enclosed were supposed to be looked at.

I can remember so many people talking about that and he wanted it in legislation. I can remember him saying it. I didn't understand why, because new at this and didn't understand why he wanted it. Because then there would be a rule. But once it gets to regulations, now they're getting thrown at us and we're not going to be able to do nothing about it, here are the rules.

Now, I'm not against helmets, not against it at all, but, again, this is collaboration we've been talking about. We've been at it a long time here. Do you know what? You had your rules; it's going to get voted 22 to 18 so it's gone to regulations. There's no more said and that's it, it's going to be pushed through without anymore – every time you question it, then there's

something – listen, the ATVs association or whatever groups, they're certainly for it. There's no question about it, but with a Side By Side that is enclosed, there is something to be said for that.

Don't ask me; ask the people who drive them. They're the ones that are writing the letters to us. They're the ones that understand it. I don't drive one. So it's hard for me to be an expert on that, because I'm not. But you can only listen to the people that have one. It's the same as we're going to listen to you guys, you're going to try to listen to us and make some regulations. Then that's where it's to.

But not to just go force it down their throat and we debated it here.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: You get to answer it if you want, when I'm finished. I'll certainly sit down and listen again. I'm going to sit down and listen to it, but that's not what the agreement was when we were here. That is not the agreement we had. If I'm not mistaken, that is not the agreement we had, not a chance.

So here you go, so now it's about a trust factor. Now it's about a trust factor.

I'll move on past that. I had my say and I don't want – that's not for here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: I'm only interested in hearing the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: You're probably the only one.

I will compliment the Health department as well. My grandson went out to the Janeway last Friday night, quick call. Short of breath and had to go out and he got a cortisone shot. He's all good. By the time he left and came back to Bay Bulls, I said, b'y, that can't be them. A half hour out, half hour back and I will say it was less than

an hour and a half. So I would have to compliment the Health department for that.

Now, younger people, it's less times they would be in the hospital than more senior people or older people, there's no question, but to me I could not believe it when I heard the door opening up, that they were back, which was good news. I would have to compliment them on that.

There are not all bad stories out there, but we're going to hear them from the seniors and from the people that – do you know what? I've been over there and God forbid I don't go over there for another 10 or 11 years, but I was over there with kidney stones. I spent some time there. I was there seven times in about 10 or 11 weeks, I was there seven times. When I went there, for me going in it was in through the door, get your vitals or whatever you're doing and you're in through the door and they're taking care of you because it's a pretty chronic issue so it goes in pretty quick.

But there are people there – my brother went out there two years ago and spent 10 hours there. He left and came home and never got seen. We all know somebody like that. So how do we fix that problem is what I'd like to see.

I went there 5 in the morning and there wasn't a doctor on. Again, that's a long time ago. There was no doctor on, wasn't going to be in until 7 o'clock. Maybe we need a couple of more doctors there. That's a pretty complicated area, there's no question, and I don't envy the position. But to go out there and sit down for eight or nine hours and a lot of these are people are very sick. They want to get served and they sit there for eight or nine hours. To me, it's a long time to be sitting there.

Again, going over there and sitting there, I think more doctors could be needed in that area, just in the emergency department. They wouldn't be sitting there eight or nine hours. You would know somebody yourself that has gone to the Health Sciences or to St. Clare's and certainly sat there for five or six hours – that's certainly happened.

During COVID, there were fewer people going in, so, hopefully, that day has gone. It's not gone

for sure, but, hopefully, we move on past it. But we need to see some improvements in that area and it's vital that we do. Some of those issues then definitely will go away.

But I'm running out of time now, I only have 13 seconds left so I'll pass it on. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As always, it's an honour to stand in this House and represent the people of my beautiful District of Terra Nova and certainly the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would be remiss if I didn't commend my esteemed colleague from Bonavista for standing up and talking about his cancer journey. I would say, one of the things I always say is you should embrace your scars and let them become your superpower, wear them like a cape. I, for one, am glad to see you back here happy and healthy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, two years ago – not two years ago, I guess a year ago – in the budget it was *CHANGE starts here*, that was the theme. It's a great idea, very noble, change needs to start here; right here on this floor in many ways, not just with budgets but with how we act in this House. But change has to start here.

This year on April 7, it was *CHANGE is in the air*. Today, on May 2, guess what? Nobody has a cent of change to do anything, not a little bit, just a few weeks later. And it's extremely, extremely sad to see the situation that's happening in this province. What's more sad is the lack of acknowledgement that it's even happening.

We all have to be getting those calls. I can tell you, the last time I stood up in this House and spoke and I said people are either not getting the

calls or they are just not answering them, somebody stood up and called me out. Well, I got emails from individuals in that district – and I'll send them to the Member if he wants them – telling me that they called that office and haven't gotten a response.

I can tell you right now, this province is at a point – it's a crossroads for every man, woman and child. Not just low income, not just seniors, not middle class, everybody is struggling. Struggling in ways that we don't understand and we ought to make our best effort to do just that. It starts right here. It starts with listening. It starts with looking.

It's funny, I think about the five-point plan and I think about some of the initiatives that are boasted about. As an example, we have eliminated taxes on home insurance. This will help people with low income. I don't know a lot of people in my district that would be considered low income who are homeowners, who carry home insurance.

We have electric rebates to switch from oil to electric. Great initiative for the people that are low income. Well, I'll tell you this, the people that I represent, a lot of the people that are low income, not only can they not afford to switch, but they don't own the homes they live in – they don't own the homes they live in. So why would they take advantage of this program? It makes no sense.

S. COADY: (Inaudible) tenant insurance.

L. PARROTT: It is tenant insurance, the Minister of Finance just said. So maybe when she stands up, she can tell the people the difference between tenant insurance and homeowners' insurance. Now, we give her the courtesy of letting her speak whenever she does and she tells us, repeatedly, they're snickering over there; can you please let me talk? Well, I would suggest that she should give me the exact same courtesy. Thank you very much.

People are screaming in this province. They are drowning in debt.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, if the minister got something to say, she should stand up and say it.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: People are screaming in this province. They are drowning in debt. It does nothing for the middle class, this budget doesn't. It does nothing for the working poor. And people are choosing between heat and healthy food. They are choosing between sending kids to programs. They are making a lot of choices they shouldn't have to make and, obviously, nothing has been done about it.

Therein lies the problem. When you go fuel up a vehicle now and you don't understand that the fuel you put in your car affects the cost of the bananas that you buy at the store. It affects the amount of paving that's going to be done this year. Certainly, asphalt is gone through the roof. Our ability to fix and do things is slipping away from us very quickly, but it starts with the people who put us here.

We need to find a way to give them back some sense of hope and some sensibility with their ability to live. Right now, every single person is struggling. And they are struggling strictly because of finances and they cannot afford to live and they should not have to make the decisions they have to make right. On top of that, we talk about adding additional taxes. We talk about things like the sugar tax. We talk about things like regionalization.

When you think about regionalization, I always say, as Newfoundland, we've got two problems that we never discuss and are huge. They're geography and population. Our geography and population doesn't enable us to go somewhere else and take a plan from another province and bring it here and say this is our plan. We need a made-right-here solution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: When I look at my district as a great example, I've got the Eastport Peninsula and the Southwest Arm. Geographically, two incredibly different areas. When I look at regionalization and I think about the plan to bring some communities under the greater Clarenville region, because Clarenville is the

largest municipality and I think to myself, what does a municipality like Clarendville offer to Goobies or Gooseberry Cove? They don't want town policing. They're not going to get sidewalks. They're not going to get the water and sewage that they want. It doesn't make sense.

But if I look at the Southwest Arm as a whole and I look at their ability to share services and what they can bring to the table, if we gave them the opportunity to bring it to the table, if they came and said this is what we need and what we want. Instead of us saying this is what you need and what you want. Instead of us trying to sell them something for nothing.

We have put out a proposal – it was a plan; now it's a proposal or a process – now it's changed; it's evolved three times. So we're at the process stage now. But we have a process where nobody knows what it means. When I say nobody knows what it means, they're saying we're going to ask you for more money, but we're not going to tell you what you're going to get in return.

Now you tell me, if there is anyone in this House, who would hand someone some money and say go buy me a car. That individual looks at you and says, well, I'll get you a car. I'm not going to tell you what colour it is. I'm not going to tell you if it has new tires or old tires, winter tires or summer tires. I'm not going to tell you what year the car is, but you give me your \$5,000 and I'll go buy you that car. It's not a very good deal.

S. COADY: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: I know the minister over there just said we never asked for \$5,000, but they're very clear that everybody is going to pay something, but they're not very clear on what they're paying for. So everybody will pay something. But as the minister just said, we never asked for anything; they're not saying what they're giving in return, and that's what's unclear.

You talk to the LSDs in my district, who you refused to talk to. I have an email from your EA who says, we are not meeting in your region. There are too many LSDs. Here we go. So talk to the LSDs and see how they feel. Because in

rural Newfoundland and you know, you're from rural Newfoundland, it's much different than the Avalon Peninsula, incredibly different.

The communication with the smaller LSDs and the individuals in those regions is essential to understand the plan. If I have a farmer that lives on Random Island and he's concerned about land usage, he's concerned whether or not regionalization means his farm can remain a farm. He doesn't know if it's going to be zoned different; none of these things are being discussed. So you wonder why people are concerned about it. It's pretty simple; they're concerned because of what's not been said. They are concerned because larger municipalities and bureaucrats are making a plan to be enforced on them without them having the say that they deserve.

Now, I understand that MNL put a lot of work into this, and I commend them for that. I'm not saying that it's all bad, but what I am saying is that the smaller regions in this province, certainly the LSDs, deserved to have a say before this plan went out. Not reactively, after it went out and people said, what's this. Because that's exactly what happened. The LSDs did not have an opportunity.

Health care: Every single individual in this province is having issues with health care. The dictionary defines gaslighting as making someone question their own reality. The term may also be used to describe a person who presents a false narrative to another group or person, which leads them to doubt their perceptions and become misled, disoriented or distressed. The NLMA, the Nurses' Union, every union associated with health care and pretty much every single individual who I have talked to in my district who has gone to the hospital have been led to believe that everything is okay. We're fine. We've got over 600 family doctors. We don't need any more family physicians. But we do need to change how we deliver care.

We're either okay or we're not. We can't be both. We've got a minister over here, when we put a PMR across a few weeks ago, who stood up in this House and said: We're not in a crisis. Our health care is beyond crisis, as it was indicated here earlier today. Our health care is

collapsing, and we have a Minister of Health and a Premier who say everything is okay. And it's not okay. The NLMA is yelling, the Nurses' Union is yelling, and here we are, sitting down saying, we've got a grip on this; we're fine.

We've got individuals lying on gurneys in the middle of a hall, waiting on heart surgery for nine days. Then they get shipped into St. John's and they wait longer, and then finally they go to Ottawa. Guess what? It's simply not good enough. And it's not about the health care that people expect; it's about the health care that people deserve. And the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better. We've had a minister in place for seven years. These aren't new programs; these problems didn't just happen – seven years.

We've got a Premier who sits over there and says: I've only been here for two. But he ran, in his words, because he knew the problems in health care. It was a big part of why he ran. So if he knew the problems were there in the previous five years, why did he put the same minister back in place? He had an opportunity when he got elected to change things. Instead, status quo stayed. There's the issue. We're not listening. We're not looking. We're not paying attention to what is happening right in front of us. It's sad. It's a sad state when the people are put in this House to look after the people who elected us and we chose to overlook.

If you think that health care isn't an issue, talk to our Member for Labrador West. I'll tell you, there is a lady up in Labrador West named Cheryl Hardy. She has dementia and there is a big movement in Labrador West about alternative care for people in that state of health.

Two years ago when my dad died, exact same situation. The difference being, it was at the very start of COVID and nobody could be there with him. But my dad was in Labrador West, he was diagnosed with dementia and they told my mom: we're moving him out of here. Too bad, so sad. St. Anthony or Goose Bay, those are your options. We don't leave Wabush and drive to St. Anthony in a few minutes. You don't leave Wabush and drive to Goose Bay in a few minutes.

If you're a senior and you have somewhere to go in a community of 15,000 or 16,000 people that have put a hell of a lot of money into this economy over the years with the two mines there, not just the mines but everything else, and they get overlooked year after year. I tell you what: everyone in this room is Cheryl Hardy. Every single person in this room is Frank Parrott. Because at some point in your life you will deal with a loved one who needs care and we are not giving it to them.

When you look at situations that are happening in Labrador West or the situation in Grand Falls-Windsor with the heart patient, it's unacceptable, and we're accepting it. There is the problem. We're accepting it and we can do better. We can do better for the people that put us here.

It is not going to happen overnight. I don't disagree with the Minister of Health's assessment or the Premier's assessment that we need long-term change in order to get where we have to go. But the issues that are happening right now, today, in front of us all, instantaneously, as we speak, there are patients lying in the hall in every hospital in Newfoundland. There are men and women going to the grocery stores that can't afford to get food or they're putting it back. There are people that aren't driving their cars because they can't afford fuel. Yet, we sit here and we turn down an emergency debate on a situation that grasps every man and woman in this province. We turned down an emergency debate on Bay du Nord and, obviously, if we look back on the Bay du Nord situation, while the project got approved, there is no question that there are other things that got turned away because of it.

We look at Noia was rebranded. We look at the C-NLOPB was rebranded. All those things didn't happen overnight. There was planning. And we don't know what Bay du Nord means for this province.

We go to electric vehicles. At the rate we're going now, we're going to have more charging stations than we do electric vehicles in the short term. Now, I don't doubt for one second that we need to look at electrification of vehicles. I actually think that it is very important. I do believe that our green future is one of the most

important things we can have. But here's the deal: If you live in rural Newfoundland and you live in a 100-amp house, which most are, and you go buy an electric vehicle, I'd love for someone to tell me how they're going to charge that vehicle when they get home, because they simply just can't plug it in.

All of these initiatives are great, but they're only good for the people that can utilize them. We're offering up all of this stuff with the assumption that it's this great solution. It is a great solution. When you talk about switching from oil to electric, when you talk about electric vehicles and money to buy them – great, awesome, if you have money to do it. The problem is nobody has money to do it and nobody seems to care. You cannot afford to do the things that were in this five-point plan. This budget simply does not address any of the other necessities for the men and women of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we keep overlooking it, it will compound year after year.

Now, I said a few weeks ago about budgets 2016, '17, '18, '19, '20, the budget was going to be balanced in '21. There's '21, there's '22 and still not balanced, seven years later. I understand the whole deal about Muskrat Falls, but this government took over Muskrat Falls with a promise to finish it and build it. Muskrat Falls was supposed to be commissioned in 2017. It's 2022 so, yes, there's great cost.

No, I wasn't here. Much like the Premier, two years; I've been here three years. Much like most people here, they didn't vote on Muskrat Falls. I'm not sure, knowing what we know now, if there would be a different outcome. At the end of the day, we have a responsibility to pay for Muskrat Falls. There's no question. But the Liberal government said time and time again in 2017 they'd have it done. Five years later, we're still sitting back looking at it. Here we are.

Whose fault? It's the PC's fault. We didn't build it. We started it; they were going to finish it. There's a big difference between the start line and the finish line. They're at opposite ends of the field and therein lies the difference. Somebody needs to take it across the finish line.

Mr. Speaker, my district is no different than any district with regard to individual issues with

roads and schools and all the same things that affect us all. I've stood in this House three times in the last two weeks prior and presented petitions on roads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't hear the Member at all.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I would say my district is no different than any district in Newfoundland when it comes to roads. The amount of emails I've gotten from people saying Come Home Year, it's shameful that people are going to come home and drive on these roads. I understand. It's astronomical. I believe the statistics are 11,000 kilometres of paved roads and 9,000 kilometres of dirt road, it's a lot. It's a lot to maintain, it's a lot to fix. Obviously, we've got a huge issue with infrastructure, and this year now with cost of fuel and the cost of asphalt, I think it gets worse.

But we have the ability to lower taxes and do things. My colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port says all the time, and he's right when he says it, government is in control of their own taxes. They choose not to change it. They choose not to give people a break at the pump. They choose not to realize that that break at the pump will give people a break at the grocery stores, it'll give people a break at the hardware stores and everywhere else. Nobody in Newfoundland is looking for a handout; they're just looking for a hand up.

As a matter of fact, I had an interesting conversation this weekend with a senior who said to me: It's not how much money I make; it's how much money you guys take. And there is the key. They're not asking for more money; they're asking for us to take less. We have the ability, as a government, to do that. Once we give them more, maybe we disqualify them from programs that they need, which has happened, and we don't consider that type of stuff.

At the end of the day, maybe, as my esteemed Member for Ferryland indicated, listening, not to the people just in this House but to the people

outside of this House and understanding what the needs are and the wants. You know, there's a difference between needs and wants. Everyone wants a lot more than they need. But we need to understand both to come to a common ground and understand, as a government, what we can provide. We don't do that; we don't do it well.

The reality of it is, is that my esteemed colleagues – and I call them esteemed because we're all here for the same reason; it's easy for us to get hot under the collar but there's not a person in this House who didn't get elected to try and help people. So when they listen to people – and we listen to people – I'm certain we get the same stories. The problem is we don't come in here and listen to each other. That's what needs to start happening.

If we are to chart a path forward for this province, it has to be a collaborative effort. It has to be an effort where people can stand up in this House and speak and not be chirped. I'll be the first one to say, I chirp as much as anyone else. That doesn't make it right or wrong.

AN HON. MEMBER: More.

L. PARROTT: Now listen to the minister over there; come on.

AN HON. MEMBER: The minister responsible for chirping.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Yeah, as quoted by the minister of chirping: more.

Listen, the reality of it is, is that we're all here for the right reason. Sometimes we lose sight of that. Sometimes we just need to sit down, take a deep breath and understand that while we're in there sitting down, there are people at the mall walking because they can't heat their house. There are people at food banks, which are empty. There are people coming from rural Newfoundland to get cancer treatment and they're wondering how they're going to pay to get back home. Being sick in St. John's is not the same as being sick anywhere else.

We are in a situation in this province where people's transportation for medical transport is

relied upon by charities, a lot of it. I mean when you look at the H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Care Foundation's Family Support Fund, what they give out for people to come here and get treatments is astronomical, and we overlook that. Imagine if all those charities disappeared and government had to fund all of that stuff.

The cost of living in this province is out of hand, and this government has the ability to do something. This government can put an amendment to their own budget right now. They can amend their budget and look for a way to fix things, and I challenge them to do it. I'm quite certain they won't, but at the end of the day, they have an opportunity to make things better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always nice certainly to stand here and to represent the people of Exploits, the people who put me here. In the past couple of months, since this budget has been discussed –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: I need my time back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's always nice to get here and represent the District of Exploits, the people who put me here, of course. Since this budget has come down, my voice is to be here in this House of Assembly for those people. I'm telling you, in the past couple of months, they've got a lot to say. They really do; they've got a lot to say.

It's good to be able to come here and express their opinions, their views and what they feel. What they feel right now, Mr. Speaker, is the cost of living, which is way, way out of control. I'm getting calls and I'm getting emails. I know everybody else is feeling it; I know they are.

We can't afford fuel. We can't afford to heat our homes. I'm getting calls from seniors that they just can't afford to heat their homes; the price of fuel is gone that high. Either that they're choosing between food. That's unfortunate. That's disgraceful with regard to what we're doing right now. We need to work collaboratively, work together and get this done. We made options. I know the government says all the time, when they're chirping along, come over, come over and tell us. We're never invited, but always to come over and tell us.

So across this House we do give you options – we have. With regard to fuel, there is still the five cents on North Atlantic that you fellows can take off. You want options, here it is: Take it off. Rebate: Our colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port is always talking about the rebate program. We had a wonderful rebate program. Actually, Grand Falls-Windsor is where it was located. Twenty-six employees there but the government decided we don't need a rebate program anymore; let's cut all them jobs. Actually, let's the people pay for that with more fuel, more taxes, higher prices. We're not going to do anything about it, only let them suffer.

So that's another option that we can do; more than happy to work with you on that. Seniors' contribution – the seniors in 2016 they cut the seniors' hours again, raised their contribution of what they had to pay. Not only now seniors can't afford the fuel, can't afford to heat their homes, they can't even afford to stay in them because of what government is after doing to them.

Yet today, as my colleague from Terra Nova mentioned, we could turn down an emergency debate. It's ridiculous. We should be debating this, talking about this and listening to our options. You want to work as a collaborative team? Listen to our options; let's have that debate. We should've had that debate and here are some of the issues and here are some of the things that we could work with and things that you can do if you want to take our suggestions and work with it and help the people of this province.

I know I'm hearing it everyday from my district. Even low-income people trying to get to work. And it's not down to the low-income people

anymore; you're talking about medium-rated people going to work, trying to get to work. We have an hour drive to get to work. I know a lot of us do because they drive from the lower end of my district probably an hour, an hour and a half away to get to Grand Falls-Windsor where most of the businesses are. Or they're driving in to Gander or they're driving from your district into Grand Falls-Windsor from the Springdale area and probably an hour away. Which they just can't afford to do anymore – they just can't afford to do anymore.

It's unfortunate when I get an email or a phone call to say, b'y, I'm going to give up work; it's better for me to be on one of the government systems. That is unfortunate, very unfortunate. I'm getting calls from single parents. They can't afford to put shoes on their children's feet. This is starting to be heartbreaking. These stories now are really starting to hit the bone and we need to do something about. And to do that we do need to sit down and talk about this stuff and how we're going to do it.

There are options there, we've all thrown out some options and these are the things we can do. Especially the rebate program right now to help everybody to get by and alleviate the gas tax. We got the carbon tax there. We're paying high carbon tax because we won't go to Ottawa and say we're not paying that carbon tax, we need that carbon tax taken off and we need to alleviate that carbon tax. That might help out with some of the fuels to help those people get to work, so that they can buy that quart of milk for their children, so they can buy some shoes for their child to be able to go school comfortably. It's deplorable the way the system is right now.

That's only just some things on the cost of living. I'm hearing a lot more out in my district, Mr. Speaker. Health care is another big issue. I've heard it here and I've heard lots of Members talk about the health care, and I know it's all over the province, the doctor situation. I hear the minister get up and say, well, we're hiring an ADM. Yes, we're going to hire an ADM. He's not coming on until the end of May, apparently. That's what he said on the news the other day. So now, he's going to hire doctors that are interested, apparently. They're interested in coming.

Anyway, now they've hired an ADM that has to put the program in place and go out and find doctors. They just went down to one health authority. They had four health authorities in place, with retention and recruitment teams. What happened to the retention and recruitment while those four authorities were there? This is seven years into this – seven years.

So now, we're going to get one ADM to come in at the end of the month and our problems are solved. Actually, we didn't even need the four health authorities in the beginning for the past seven years. We didn't need that. We'll get some recruitment and retention done now.

I don't know where that's going to come to, Mr. Speaker, but we need to work collaboratively again and listen to us. You know, we're not saying this to degrade you fellows or try to get you fellows in a bad way. We're trying to do this to offer some solutions to the way this should be done and what we can do together to help the people of our province, the people of our districts that we so need to help.

Health care again – we've all heard the states of the emergency rooms, especially in Central Newfoundland. I know they do. I know the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, I know the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, I know the Member for Gander, himself, which is the minister, I know the Member for Baie Verte - Springdale –

AN HON. MEMBER: Green Bay.

P. FORSEY: Green Bay, sorry.

Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and Exploits. You know, we've all heard the stories of the health care – the 24-hour emergency service. They are in Grand Falls-Windsor, congregated in hallways, almost on floors with nowhere to go, only congregated there.

So if the minister wants an option, here's one option that he can take: Open up the 24-hour emergency service that he promised the past two years in the elections, which would – and it is cost neutral by the way. This is not costing you nothing. This is what you fellows said in the election.

AN HON. MEMBER: When is the ribbon cutting?

P. FORSEY: Yeah, when is the ribbon cutting going to be on that?

Actually, not only for the 24-hour service, the Liberal candidate at the time, I think he's employed now at the Premier's office. Him and Flat Stanley was down making announcements on that, actually. He had his placard. Him and Flat Stanley were down going to open that.

Anyway, to be serious about it, open up the 24-hour emergency service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Centre. Everything there is cost neutral. Move some of those people towards that area. Alleviate some of the stress off our regional hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor.

If you want options of how to do this stuff, there are some options. You've got to listen to us to do that. Instead, the Premier feels – now, actually, all of those districts I just mentioned, apparently, there are no voices in those districts.

Central Health has seven districts. You all know it. Central Health has seven districts, but we have no voice, apparently. We have no voice. The Premier himself stood on the floor and said there is no voice in Central Newfoundland. We need to hire somebody to have a voice in Central Newfoundland.

Now, that's ridiculous, for seven MHAs to be in the Central Health system, yet we need – instead of taking the money and putting it towards the health care system or something else to help alleviate some of the pressures that are in there, the minister could take \$250,000 – what do they call it? He found a pot of money. That's what they did; they found a pot of money in the Premier's office that we can do this.

I'm sure somebody who's trying to get to work to feed their child or to buy shoes for that child to get to school, I'm sure they would love to find a pot of money. Boy, wouldn't they be just glad about finding a pot of money. Yet, the Premier could find those pots of money because we don't want to have a voice in Central Newfoundland.

Even in his own government, he doesn't have a voice in Central Newfoundland. It's terrible.

Seven MHAs in Central Newfoundland and no voice, so the Premier has to hire one. Not only that, take an assistant with him. Giving him an assistant as well, because we can't do this. Seven MHAs can't do our job in Central Newfoundland. It's unreal.

That is the worst I've ever heard. When you talk about wasting money, when you're looking at wasting money, we got elected – I'm here talking about it, I'm here offering solutions. I know the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and the Member for Terra Nova just got up; I know we've offered solutions. We don't need another voice. We're here offering solutions.

You fellows can get up and offer the solutions as well. You certainly can. You don't need –

AN HON. MEMBER: Crown lands.

P. FORSEY: Crown lands, that's another one.

Actually, I dare say the minister's office is looking after a lot of that, too, solving a lot of problems in Central Newfoundland with that office.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: Pardon?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: Oh no doubt.

But anyway, Speaker, that's the type of thing that your government is doing. If you want to sit down and talk about it, we can certainly sit down and talk about it.

I know it's not only Central Newfoundland; it's out here as well. I had an email – actually, it was a text – today from an elderly gentleman who had problems with his foot. He was diagnosed with an illness and he had to be at St. Clare's today. They booked him in St. Clare's today. Now, the cost of living is not bad enough. He came to St. Clare's today, with the cost of living the way it is, it probably cost him \$200 just to drive out here today. When they got there, they had to cancel the procedure – when they got here

– no beds. That's only today. That's what I had to face today.

You can see why I gets up here and I gets passionate about it. I'm sure everybody else does as well because hearing those stores hurts. It really does hurt.

Now that gentleman – this was only after lunch today – he's got to find a hotel now. He has to find a place to stay, either that or he has to drive back home. Either way, it's costly to him. I'm sure they have to have a meal somewhere in the day, so that trip probably cost him \$500 or \$600 today, and no health care.

This is just not adding up here. We need to do better for the people of our province, not the way we're doing it. Not spending money where it's not needed. I mean, Rothschild for \$5 million to tell us what we own; \$30 million for another company. We're going to streamline the health care system, apparently. I don't see where that's to at the moment.

But, again, seniors in their own homes, Mr. Speaker, the same thing I'm hearing it all again. Seniors can't afford to buy fuel; they can't afford to heat their homes. It is costly to be able to stay there. It's ridiculous what we're doing. You want options: let's work together, let's help the people. They're the ones that are asking us. They're asking us every day. They want options for fuel. They want options for food. They want options to buy clothes. They want to be able to live, too. There is a difference between survival and living. We don't have to live lavishly either. We can live comfortably, but we don't have to be always trying to survive. We don't need to be in that bracket.

We need to put everybody on a comfortable level that they can get out and they can live and they can be able to take their child to a movie sometime, and I know that's costly. So maybe they can take that child and take them to a movie sometime. It's always nice to take that child just to buy them something extra. But a lot of those people just can't do that. They have to keep those children home. They can't even afford to, like I say, let them go to school.

You talk about the breakfast programs are volunteer people; thank God, they're there. It

really is. When a parent has to send the child to school and depend on a breakfast program, and it is not on a volunteer basis anymore. They're almost making this like the parent is really depending on the breakfast program. Again, thank God for those volunteers that are there.

Again, the health care system. A lot of our volunteer people – I know the Lions Club in particular – take individuals and they help with whatever health needs they need. We can send a cancer patient out this way to have operation done. We can buy medical equipment for them. They do a lot. I'm only choosing the Lions Club here now.

When the government is trying to give back – or not giving back seeing as how our health care is in such deplorable condition in regard to the emergency rooms and everything else, and those volunteer people on one hand are trying to push out and give more. When volunteer people are trying to give more than what the government is giving right now with regard to helping the health care system, we have a problem.

Actually, we've had a seven-year problem, only the Premier won't address that seven-year problem. That's one place we can start with addressing the health care system. That's one place we can start.

There are other things we can do. Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that everybody here has got ways, opinions and ideas that can certainly sit down and help our system. We need to be talking back and forth. They need to be taking our ideas, taking our suggestions, going back to the Premier, sitting down to your round table in there and saying b'ys, let's try this; let's do this.

So we're giving you options. We're not here just to give you a hard time; we want to help you out. But when you see frivolous money being spent, especially on an office in Grand Falls-Windsor. Us seven MHAs, we don't need anybody to speak for us. I know I don't.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: And I know the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans don't. So why would the five others from the Liberal side want somebody to speak for them? Because the

Premier already said there's no voice in Central Newfoundland.

That's shameful, boys. That's shameful. That's shameful for the Premier to say that you fellas don't speak. B'y, if I was in your caucus room ... But anyway –

AN HON. MEMBER: Finish the statement.

P. FORSEY: I'm finished that statement, what else you want me – why, do you want to speak now?

AN HON. MEMBER: If you were in our caucus room, finish the statement.

P. FORSEY: You want to speak now, do you? Here, get up and tell the minister how bad the health care is. Get up and tell the Premier.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Maybe they're throwing up options on how to fix this system, I don't know. At least they're up; at least we know now they got a voice. That's a good thing to know. I can put that one to bed.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) your idea.

P. FORSEY: Anyway, yeah, it's good. I just gave them to you. Again, you're not listening to them. See, look, there's the problem again, Mr. Speaker. After all that we just said, now he wants some ideas. I don't know when he's supposed to listen to get the ideas – well, same thing as the Premier I suppose, is supposed to be listening too.

Anyway, I've only got a little bit of time, Mr. Speaker, so I'll give one of them now a chance because they seem to want to get up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a privilege again to stand in this House and represent the wonderful people of Labrador West, and it's great to get this opportunity again to speak to the budget through this amendment. I know I never got my full thoughts out in the first time I speak, but it's great now I have this opportunity again. I can pick up where I left off in talking about some of the situations, especially cost of living, and how individuals in this province are feeling the pinch.

My region is one of the most expensive regions right now for all fuels. You never think about it as a region that is actually closer to the refinery, where most of our fuels come. Our fuels are delivered by rail, biweekly. You think that we'd have an advantage, but strangely enough we don't and we are such negatively impacted.

It's a region with such economic development and prosperity. We can't find workers for almost any industry right now. Both mines have laundry lists of mass amounts of job opportunities right now. We have contractors who can't keep staff because it's just so many people moving on to different aspects of their career and stuff. Another example, my wife, who works in the service industry, is constantly putting out ads looking for people to come work in the service industry where she's to. It's a beehive of activity, but at the same time a lot of people are reaching out saying the cost of living is really expensive. The cost of living here in the North is really expensive. Where is the break? Where is the opportunity to actually get ahead? More and more people even in a very prosperous place like Labrador West are not getting ahead. It's something that we really need to take a serious look at.

A great example of that is home care. We cannot get home care workers in Labrador West. The reason is, as an individual home care worker, the authority is only going to pay them \$15.15 an hour. In a place like Labrador West, that's not even up to the cost of living. So now because we have home care workers who can't make a living doing home care – and some people want to do that line of work. I know my sister-in-law is a home care worker, but she'll never come to Labrador West to do it because she'd never be able to afford to live, so she does it in another province.

This is how we have to look at the thing is now we have home care workers who are not making a living wage, therefore that's one senior or one individual who is out a home care worker and their physical needs and stuff fall behind. It's a chain, and you find these things continuously.

I know that a lot of the issues that we face in Labrador West come back to a systemic issue about housing. Every single issue when it comes to recruitment of doctors, health care workers, workers in the mining industry, workers in the service industry, even some government employees, it all goes back to the fact that we do not have adequate amount of housing in Labrador West.

Especially now with the cost of fuels and the cost of everything gone through the roof, how are we supposed to convince a developer to come up and actually build houses, or to build an apartment building, or even anything like that when there's no incentive and it's going to (inaudible) at the end of the day? That's the thing that we need to stop and look at and go, where are the solutions in getting developers to come up to build houses? Where are the solutions to actually get people to take these jobs when the pay is so low that it doesn't even meet the cost of living?

Housing and your wages are the two things that seem to go back to everything that we're looking at right now. I know I had a conversation with the Minister of Education very recently about recruitment of teachers. We're having a very hard time recruiting teachers in Labrador West. It goes back to that there are people interested in teaching in Lab West, but they don't want to pay \$400,000 for a 60-year-old house that probably needs a pile of renovations. That's where we go back to is it's a cost-of-living issue and it's a housing issue, because people can't afford \$400,000 for a 60-year-old house that needs a lot of work done and, at the same time, the wages there is not competitive in Labrador West so they can't afford it in the beginning.

At the end of the day, we have to look at the bigger picture of where some of these systemic issues that we face in society and we face in our province to solve some of the other issues. So where do we step in and where do we come in to say, you know what, we encourage development

of building houses in places like Labrador West or Happy Valley-Goose Bay or places like that where there is a need for housing? But not just necessarily low-income housing, but even the middle class right now is having a housing crunch.

An interesting thing that we see, when it comes to housing, is the minute someone puts up an ad, apartment for rent, there are about 200 to 300 messages: Where's it to? Where's it located? How much is it a month? Just piles of messages that just shows how much of a need there is for housing in a place like Labrador West. There are only 10,000 of us. It's a very serious issue that we're facing in a region that is a very prosperous region.

We have to come back and say where do we, as government, or anyone, come and step in and help a municipality or help a group or something like that, like seniors – we go back to seniors housing. There are some seniors that don't really require assisted care, but some seniors who are living in these very large old houses that can no longer upkeep it. So where do we step in and say, okay, seniors, where do we help you get some housing that's appropriate for your needs, to free up some more housing for the middle class in Labrador West?

These are the big-picture things that, at the end of the day, it will help solve larger systemic issues in the community. This is where we're to in the region: We can't find adequate housing for everybody, and it is such a very large need that we need to have a look at. I know the two municipalities that make up Labrador West have been racking their brains about it. They have land available. They have their expertise and everything available, but, at the end of the day, developers are too discouraged or the cost seems to be too great to actually put a shovel in the ground and put up something.

We haven't had any new housing or anything built in Labrador West in a decade. And what was there then, it was only half a plan. The developers never even finished what the original plan was in that time. So large amounts of land were cleared, nothing was ever built. There are large plots of land for apartment buildings that were never built, yet the need never ever went away.

It was the developers left discouraged and that because, you know, it is expensive to do work in a northern region, but on top of that it's always expensive to do work in a mining region as well. Because, as I like to say, I think of mining companies, they're almost like the dragons from *The Hobbit*. They sit on their huge hoards of wealth. At the same time, they can pay more to contractors; they can pay more. And they drive the prices of the region through the roof when it comes to construction and other types of mining servicing and stuff like that.

A former mayor of Lab City always used to call it the Labrador tax. The tax that is actually on top of doing business in Labrador, because the mining companies do throw their weight around. Unfortunately, the service industry, the health industry, all the government services and stuff, they all suffer. Because, obviously, their wages and everything are paired to more Island-centric and not really to take into the fact and accountabilities of Labrador, but then on top of it again, Labrador West, where mining does dominate the room.

So the government needs to look at what to do to offset some of these extraordinary costs that are conflated by a very dominant industry. And not to get me wrong, the mining companies do have to take some responsibility as well, in the sense that they are the largest employers in the region, significantly. But, at the end of the day, they're not governments. They're only responsible for their employees inside their gates.

They're not responsible for the communities and the individuals who don't work inside the gates, or those who are outside or retired. That's the responsibility of government. Government needs to take on responsibility for every district in this province, including a district that, yeah, maybe is prosperous now. But there are responsibilities that government have to take on and that include housing and health care and education. These are responsibilities of governments that are in our Constitution, are in our acts, in our bills and rights and stuff like that that governments are responsible to deliver these services. Because it's expensive in an area, that doesn't exclude a government from executing their responsibilities.

So solutions need to be found on how do we house people, how do we educate our youth, how do we educate our young adults and, also, how do we deliver other services. And Labrador is a challenge, no doubt about it, but it is a responsibility that has to be taken.

We've had projections and stuff of the current outlook for the region; it's really good. We see iron trading at a very high – right now, it's currently at the same level it was 10 years ago and it's projected to increase again as the world comes out of this pandemic and the world rebuilds itself. A lot of governments and countries around the world are preparing for large infrastructure spending and stuff like that. So with that comes steel and with steel comes iron. So we do have a foothold and a great future ahead of us if all goes to plan.

But at the same time, we look at how the region is preparing itself. The companies in the region recently in a CIM article talked about their transitions and their current rapid move to meet the requirements of the EU and other jurisdictions that they have to reduce their environmental footprint, their carbon footprint and stuff like that.

So this is actually going to bring a lot more workers into Labrador West and, like I just talked about, we have no housing. So we're about to prepare to see these companies spend large amounts of investment into their own operations to meet the new environmental requirements of the EU and other jurisdictions in order to sell on the global market and to sell into these markets.

So with these upgrades and these changes to the mining facilities, we're going to see a massive amount of people moving into the region, but there's nowhere for them to live. And this is where we need to be prepared. But as I said, we can't also shoot ourselves in the foot by not doing anything. We have to be prepared to actually work with the communities in the region to find ways to house people, to encourage people to move into the region, but at the same time, provide all the services that are required, that need to be provided.

A good example: when I first got elected in 2019, we finally got eight doctors in Labrador

West and it lasted a whole five months. Now we're down to three. Since 2019 until now, we're now down to three doctors in the region, from eight. The amount of people that have called and contacted and reached out is phenomenal.

But another thing that is striking is there is a nurse practitioner in the hospital that does some work and that's great. But there is only one. They're only budgeted to have one. Yet, there are seven nurse practitioners in the region but there is only one that actually has a clinic in the hospital. There is also a private nurse practitioner who offers services but you have to pay upfront for the service.

She was trained in this province. She graduated Memorial University. She used to work for the health authority. But in order for her to practice as a nurse practitioner outside of the thing, she can't bill MCP. That's one simple solution to alleviate a bigger problem, in the meantime, until we get to a place where everything that is outlined in the Health Accord or any other document or any other report or anything like that. It's just one simple change that could be made in the interim to allow nurse practitioners to bill MCP in private clinics so we can get past this. So everyone has an equal opportunity and equal access to health care.

Because we don't have that right now. We're just so backlogged with the lack of doctors. We're so inundated with that, yet there are some small simple solutions to alleviate some of the stress that we currently have. That's one thing, I have people who say I can't pay \$50 a visit to a nurse practitioner to get my prescriptions or to get my this or that, or a big one is the commercial medical for a commercial driver's licence to get their medicals done. That's the biggest one it seems right now is people trying to get that done throughout the year so they keep their jobs. Yet, you have to pay a nurse practitioner that was trained in this province, lives in this province, worked in this province but in order to access her services, well you have to open up your wallet. In a country like Canada, who pioneered universal health care, we pioneered it, we're still asking people to open up their wallets and pay for health care.

That goes back to MTAP, which is another thing that I did discuss earlier – it's really striking especially with the cost of living, how some people who are really pinched right now and really short – the cost of airfare to go for medical appointments.

Interesting enough, all the airlines recently increased all their fuel surcharges. So the price to get out to your medical appointment in St. John's from Labrador West has just increased significantly because of the addition to the fuel surcharges on airline tickets. Now it's even more expensive for people in Labrador West to access health care.

This is Canada. We pioneered universal health care, yet we don't have universal health care, especially if you live in a Northern region. That's a stark take-away that we should all stop and think about for a second, going: How do we fix this? How do we make sure that everyone has equal and deserving access to health care when we have to get a \$2,000 airline ticket to go out and ask a doctor about something that normally would have been taken care of in Labrador West but because of the shortage of doctors and whatnot is no longer available?

And then the ones that you stop and think about are all the seniors who are living in houses that require a lot of maintenance that there's no need for them to live in, who are stretched thin. Some of them lost part of their pensions when Wabush Mines filed for CCAA and had their pensions reduced, the amount of widows that are in the region – these are people who can't afford even the 50 per cent prepaid program, which is a bureaucratic nightmare to even get that money, to even get out to see a doctor.

So we are putting a lot of pressure on a lot of people, unnecessarily. A lot of undue hardship on the people that we should be – stop and think, how can we address this? How we can make it affordable but also at the same time make it applicable so that everyone has equal and deserving access to a service?

Another thing that came up and I did touch on earlier, but it was the recruitment of teachers in Labrador West. It's hard for a teacher to move into the region when there is no available housing and what is available is way priced out

of what any person in that field can afford. And it all goes back to housing.

And I did have a chat with the minister responsible for Education about it and there's some stuff there, but it is still going to be a persistent issue that really needs to be addressed in the longer term on how do we make it so that teachers can actually afford to work in Labrador, to actually find housing and accommodation and start their careers. It's not very often you'll find a very senior teacher that decides to uproot from a place and move to a place like Labrador West. It's going to be, obviously, young graduates and younger teachers who actually want to start a life and a career and everything in education.

So it is something that the government really needs to have a step back and take a look at: How do we recruit and retain teachers in regions like Labrador and rural, remote communities on the Island? How do you make it that they can afford to live in those communities, they can have actual meaningful careers there and actually help the students that they want to help?

I'm sure all of us in this House have a teacher that we'll always remember because they did something for us or they helped us or they encouraged us, and we all have fond memories of that. But also in this changing times and world, we need to make sure that we get those people into rural and remote communities so they can enrich the lives of students and help them on their path. Your first step towards a career is usually while you're a student in a classroom. I think it is something that we really need to not forget is about recruitment and retention of teachers in rural and remote communities.

It all goes back, again, to housing affordability and how do we work through all the situation that we currently are in, but at the same time how do we make the right choices when doing budgeting and to actually look at each district individually. Because each district has a very unique set of circumstances, a unique set of challenges, a unique set of understanding. It is not a one-sock-fits-all kind of solution. We do have to do it region by region and district by district. We're such a massive land mass of a province and we stretch out over a massive area that we all face uniqueness and unique

challenges that need to be addressed individually. But government needs to take it on to actually do it and actually look at each individual place through a different lens.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last time I spoke, I guess on the main motion, I had focused on affordability issues and that is still a huge one. It is unfortunate that the motion that was put forward earlier today by my colleagues in the Official Opposition was found not to be in order and we didn't get to have an emergency debate. But there will be opportunity, as you said in your ruling, Mr. Speaker, to talk about these issues throughout the budgetary process. I will certainly be doing so as this session progresses over the next few weeks.

But I did have a couple of issues that I did want to sort of stray to a little bit that a couple of people had asked me to raise, and these are around COVID-19. I just want to say, first of all, that generally speaking I felt and I think most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians felt that Dr. Fitzgerald did a good job in managing this pandemic. I think most people would agree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: No doubt not all, but I think most would. Did I agree with every single decision that was made on any given day? No, there were some things that I questioned along the way. I think there were things that a lot of people questioned along the way. But, generally speaking, I thought that she offered good solid guidance, and it got us through to where we are today.

With that said, there are a couple of issues that are still ongoing, I would say, Mr. Speaker, that

some people have asked me to bring up. One relates to the rapid antigen tests and the fact that with the exception of this province, Prince Edward Island, and I believe Nova Scotia – although at one point in time, I think Nova Scotia was providing them, but apparently they aren't now. With the exception of those three provinces, the majority of the provinces in the country are providing rapid antigen tests to their citizens, to the general public, free of charge. Depending on which province you go to, you might be able to pick them up at the public library, you might be able to pick them up at the public clinic, you might pick them up at schools or you might pick them up at one of the drugstores, for example, free of charge. But not here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately, PCR testing has ended for most folks; albeit for the vulnerable, what we would consider the most vulnerable people and people in health care and so on, can still get a PCR test. I understand the reasoning for not continuing on, because COVID has been so widespread now, and of course part of the problem that's leading to issues and the wait-lists and everything in our hospital, tertiary care and everything else, is because of the fact that a lot of the professionals who should have been – nurses for example who should have been working in ORs were out doing COVID testing and so on instead. And as a result we ended up with this huge backlog.

So I understand why we couldn't keep that up forever. But I think, as most provinces are doing, I cannot understand why we cannot be providing free PCR tests, like most provinces. Instead, our citizens are forced to go to Pipers, or Marie's, or Shoppers or whatever and pay 15 to 20 bucks a kit. Now, granted, not everybody needs them. I know if you have kids in school – I've had people who've said that they never even used the first 10 and they got 10 more and now they've got 20 for their kids that they never used first nor last.

The minister talking about if you know someone with kids you can share antigen tests and so on. I know people have told me that they've had family members, for example, in Alberta or other provinces who just went up to their local Shoppers, picked them up for free, stuck them in the mail and sent them to Newfoundland. So

we're actually using kits from other provinces because we won't provide them ourselves.

I understand that not everyone is going to need them all the time, but there are people who have immunocompromised family members and so on and in order to be comfortable in being around them, anytime they have a sniffle or a cough, whatever, they want to make sure they don't have COVID-19.

There are people, for work purposes, not wanting to expose co-workers if they get a little sniffle or a cough or a sore throat, they want to make sure they don't have COVID-19. It's fine for someone to say, well, if you have a cough or a sniffle, stay home.

That's wonderful is you're working in a place and you have an employer where you have lots of sick leave on the books and so on. If you have a sore throat today, you can stay home for a day or two days or three days and it's all paid for, no worries. But if you're someone who's maybe self-employed, like a taxi operator, or if you're someone who's working in home care or whatever the case might be, you're working in a job in retail, you don't have any sick leave, you don't have any benefits. These people can't afford to stay home.

Unless they know that they have COVID-19, they're going to go to work with that scratchy throat and so on. They don't want to do it, but they really have no choice. So for people in that situation, having these kits available to them free of charge, like you have in most other provinces, I think is the right thing to do. I do not agree with the fact that our government is not providing that.

I've been quite clear publicly, as have other people. There have been a number of community groups out in the media, as of late, talking about that very thing, about people who can't afford these tests. In a time when we have skyrocketing fuel prices, home heating prices and groceries are gone through the roof, this is just another expense that the most vulnerable people cannot afford to pay. So I really think government needs to go back and revisit that decision.

Another issue that's COVID related, and I'm sure the Members have probably gotten some calls and messages, from the onset of COVID, Dr. Fitzgerald starting putting in all these restrictions and Public Health orders and so on and one of those things was a VaxPass. While I understand the concept of the VaxPass, I'm fully vaccinated, as is all my family members, I believe in the efficacy of the vaccine, so I'm not an anti-vaxxer at all, quite the opposite. But not everybody feels that way for whatever reason.

People in a free democratic society, like it or not, agree with them or not, they do have the right to choose what goes in their body. As I had said to some of these people, that there's nobody – and it's true, nobody – tied anyone down to a chair and stuck a needle in their arm and forced them to get a shot. But a lot of people, let's face it, by coercion, had to get the shot because if not they couldn't go to work, they couldn't feed their families and so on. And there are some people who decided, do you know what? I am not going to be coerced and I am just not getting the shot. It's not going inside my body. It's as simple as that.

So we have about 95 per cent, 97 per cent, whatever the case might be, of people who are fully vaccinated. I would suggest at this point in time that we're at a point where anyone who wanted to be vaccinated, anyone who was going to be coerced and forced to be vaccinated, would be vaccinated. That other 3 per cent to 5 per cent are not getting vaccinated. It's just not happening. It's over.

So you have to question the fact that given the fact that someone who is fully – because we didn't know at the beginning – a lot of these facts we didn't know. In the beginning, we were, at least led to believe, and maybe it was because as time was going on we were learning about this stuff, that somehow being vaxxed was going to prevent me from catching it, prevent me from spreading it. But we now know that's not the case.

So somebody who, whether you are vaccinated or not, if I'm not vaccinated, in theory, if I catch COVID-19, it's going to decrease my chances of fighting off the disease and I could get sicker than somebody who was vaccinated. But the fact that I am not vaccinated is not affecting the

health and safety of anyone else because the vaccinated person can spread it and catch it just as easy as a non-vaccinated person. And, of course, that's why the vaccine mandate ended and we no longer have a vaccine mandate to be able to go to the movies or go to a bar or go anywhere. We can go where we want. There's no more VaxPass. You can go to a hospital.

So you can go as an unvaccinated person anywhere in the public, be around whoever you want; you don't need a VaxPass. But if I am a government employee, someone who might have come here to work 20 years or 30 years ago, and we do have some who – teachers, people in health care and everything else, some have reached out to me – worked here for 20-odd, 30 years. I can go to Costco. I can go to the movies. I can go to the bar. I can go take a cruise. I can do whatever I want, but I can't go to work and support my family because the provincial government has decided to punish me because I didn't want to have a needle stuck in my arm.

That's what happened. That's a fact. So in fairness – and, again, I'm in favour of the vaccine, I am vaccinated. But given the fact that people can go anywhere else they want and be around whoever they want and there are no VaxPasses, I just don't understand why we are continuing to force government employees who are not vaccinated to not be able to work. To say: you are going to have to stay home. I don't understand; it makes no sense.

They're at no greater risk than the vaccinated person. They're not going to catch it or give it to you any easier than the vaccinated person is. So it makes zero sense, unless there's something I'm missing. Maybe the Minister of Health, when he gets up, he can speak to it. Because maybe I'm missing something, but that's clearly my understanding. It's just being punitive at this point.

So I understand that there was supposed to be some sort of a sunset provision or something until some time in June, maybe, it was going to be reviewed again, I think. Maybe the Minister of Finance is shaking her head there. I think she might be able to confirm that. So I certainly hope that when we get to that point, that we're going to look at this, you know, and not force

people, hard-working people, some of them have put in many years here, contributing to the public service and so on, that they're going to be able to go back to work and earn a living for their families.

And if there is some accommodation that may have to be made, then make it. I'm really surprised that they haven't gone to human rights, to be honest with you, I really am. But anyway, maybe they have. Maybe they were unsuccessful. I don't know. But it seems to me, at this point, it's less about safety and more about being punitive.

So that's just being fair to those people. I'm not knocking anyone. Like I said, I support everything that would have been done. I'm in favour of vaccines, but we have to be fair to everybody and, at this point in time, I think that perhaps we need to revisit that and see if these people can actually go back to work to be able to feed their families.

I'm down to about 7½ minutes, so I also want to bring up some broader health care issues. This is not going to be new to anybody because I'm sure everybody's been bombarded with phone calls to your office, emails and Facebook is a big one, Facebook Messenger. I think more people contact you on Facebook Messenger these days than ever did before on emails. But a lot of people are very, very concerned over the whole family doctor issue. Not having a family physician. Not having primary care.

And, of course, we've opened up some collaborative care clinics. That concept sounds great. I'm in favour of the concept, of sort of a one-stop shop. If I just need a prescription, if I just need someone to give me a note to continue on with my prescription, if the nurse can do it, perfect, no need to tie up the doctor. If the pharmacist can do it, perfect.

That concept works, I think. I think it's a good concept. But to shut down – the problem is that you're kind of robbing Peter to pay Paul. I know in Mount Pearl, as an example, there's a doctor there – because I've had all of her patients contact me. I'm not saying all of them, but a lot of them. It feels like it was all of them. The contacted me about the fact they've been notified that this doctor is shutting down her

office in June and moving to a collaborative clinic, but she can't take her patients with her. That's the part that doesn't make sense to me. That's the part where I would have the problem.

So if this doctor had 3,000 patients or 5,000, I don't know – just say 3,000 patients and they're saying now she can have a nurse and a nurse practitioner and a pharmacist and they're all here working together now. So instead of her seeing 3,000 patients, now we can up that to 10,000 patients, perfect. But let the 3,000 patients that she's had – some of them for a number of years. Let them be the first 3,000 and then add 7,000 more. But you're going to tell these 3,000 people, sorry, your doctor is gone, and now you can go in on some website and see if you might be able to get into the collaborative clinic or not.

Absolutely terrible – absolutely terrible what we're doing to people. It's wrong. Again, I just say the concept is fine, but for God sakes if you're going to be poaching doctors from a private clinic to go to collaborative care, at least let them take their patients with them. All you're doing now, you already had a bunch of people that are stressed out, they had no doctor and now you're going to take another group and you're going to abandon them. Kick them to the curb. Some of them with very serious health issues; been seeing this doctor, this doctor knows their family, knows their history and everything else. They might not ever get to see that doctor in that particular clinic again.

Let them come with the doctor. Seems like common sense. The problem is that, quite often, we see that common sense is not so common unfortunately.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that we're running out of time. I still have some time left, for my speaking time, which I will take at another time and, in the meantime, I will call for adjournment of the debate.

Thank you.

SPEAKER (Bennett): The motion is that we now adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that we do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Before we adjourn, I just want to remind the Social Services Committee that there will be Estimates at 6 p.m. here in the House with the Health and Community Services division.

In accordance with subsection 9(2), this House of Assembly do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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