



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

FIRST SESSION

Number 47A

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Tuesday

May 3, 2022
(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to take a different tack here, because I'm going to have a conversation as to where and to inform the House as to a suggestion as to where we could earn more money and benefit those in rural Newfoundland and within the province. So at least I want to try to pass that on, and that will be a contribution for your thought processes as you get around and make some decisions, and just see if you can see a little bit of merit in what I present.

But before I do so, I just to mention that my hon. Member for Ferryland stood up and gave a Member's statement about the Flatrock Flyers and the Southern Shore and how they defeated the Clarenville Caribous four games straight, didn't give them too many goals, and didn't even give them a game. He said six Herders, and I think he was modest in the fact that this man played on the teams that won five Herders. So I would say, way to go to the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I know that we were trying to get entertainment into George's Brook-Milton, their cultural house one year, and we were in hot pursuit of Kellie Loder. I know my Member had stated in his address and wished her best of luck as a songwriter and singer from Badger. She is in the *Canada's Got Talent*, so I want to wish her all the best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We had Estimates this morning and I must say, learned lots, sat down and we engaged the department. I learned that we are an

exporter of milk, which was exciting. I looked at that and said: Boy, that's great; I didn't know that. But to know that we were self-sufficient in our milk products as well as others, but also we're exporting it, and that was good.

The only thing that myself and the minister may have not seen eye-to-eye on was at one point in time I told him during Estimates that the fishing industry ought to be a \$5-billion industry as opposed to a \$1 billion. And I think he might have looked at and said, well, you share what your science or what you've got, if it's something that he doesn't have. The only thing I would say to you is let me see before I start whether I can rationalize to you some thinking. Because in this House if you did an analysis of what was being discussed on the floor of this House, we're all here because of the fishing industry.

Everything we've had in Newfoundland and Labrador, our beginnings, were the fishing industry. Our dispersed geography is because we were close to the fishing grounds. It stretched all over our coastal communities. But in our decision-making body, which are the 40 Members here in this House of Assembly, not a lot of times that the fishery comes up. And that's part my responsibility, it's part the minister's and it's part the other 38 Members that would be in this House. There's not a riding here in this House of which the fishery is not a significant part of, and it ought to be more significant.

Let me share with you – and when the budget was read and the hon. minister read out the budget on the fishery, I was thinking I was disappointed that it was only a billion. The price of crab is so high, but I was a little disappointed that we were settling and getting excited about \$1 billion. And I noticed that the government at the time gave a rousing applause as if this was great where we currently find ourselves in the fishery. And that concerned me a little bit.

Let me just give you some numbers. I've said before in the House, we have 200,000 metric tons we harvest – 200,000 metric tons is what we harvest and that equates to \$1 billion. So just keep that in mind. That's our fishery, 200,000 metric tons.

So this morning the minister and his wonderful staff mentioned about capelin and they said the value of the capelin stock was \$17 million. I don't know if that was accurate, but I think that's what was estimated, that the –

D. BRAGG: Last year's.

C. PARDY: Last year.

So \$17 million landed value is what was stated. Out harvest for capelin is 14,500. It nets us \$17 million. Capelin in Iceland, and I'll give you Norway – and remember, global warming, every country we have in this world is battling and has the environmental issues that we would have. Climate warming is an issue with all those fisher nations. There's nothing different about that.

In Iceland, the quota is reported to be as high as 900,000 metric tons for 2022. If it were 200,000 tons – remember we are 14,500 – that would be 234 million. Norway is 70,000 metric tons, which, again, would be 4.8 times what we harvest in capelin and they would be up 82 million. That is one species. That is one species we got.

Let me give you some of the other ones that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. The quota, the total allowable catch for cod, in Newfoundland is 13,000 metric tons; Norway it is 708,000-plus tons; Iceland is 180,000 tons.

We've got haddock. We're less than 1,000 in Newfoundland and Labrador. The haddock in Iceland is 33,000, the quota. Norway is 180,000 metric tons. We are less than 1,000.

The mackerel, it was 4,000 last year. This year it is closed. In Iceland it's 140,000 metric tons and in Norway it's 298,000 metric tons.

The herring, we are less than 15,000 metric tons; Iceland is 68,000; Norway is 454,000 metric tons. If we looked at the value of that alone, and we know that our shellfish is our most lucrative and that is what is giving us our value right now. But if we look at all the species that we have in our waters and know that we collect 200,000 metric tons and we've got the largest coastline, coastal coastline, in the world, two currents that

are meeting that are strategically making it a very rich, fertile breeding ground and one would say: Why are our numbers so low?

Gus Etchegary and many other fishers would say they are low because of federal mismanagement. Federal mismanagement since 1949. That is a whole different topic that we can discuss, but it is what it is.

The other significant difference with Newfoundland and Labrador and those other countries is the seal predation. The difference between those nations and ours are the seals. They have less than two million harp seals on their quota. We now, I would think, are probably close to 10 million. In 2019, we were 7.9 million.

The way the herds are growing. The helicopter that flew up the coast and the Northern Peninsula that I seen a video of two weeks ago, it was constant while they were flying and while the people were talking the helicopter was taking a picture of the ice and the seals that were on the ice. After about 5 minutes in the presentation – and this was the St. John's Rotary Club where Bob Hardy was speaking on seal predation and where we ought to be – it became a little unnerving. There were so many, and the helicopter was moving, it was constant and they were littered all over the ice.

We talk about our cod fishery – we usually don't have grey seals pupping in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think that is uncommon, from my understanding. Sable Island off Nova Scotia, that's the real breeding ground, 80 per cent plus are there and the others are not too far off. But now they're saying they're pupping in and on Newfoundland and Labrador coastline.

Seals are reported to eat 200,000 metric tons of fish in the ocean every six days. Let me repeat that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Repeat, repeat.

C. PARDY: I'm going to repeat it a couple times.

Every six days our seal population consumes 200,000 metric tons. Now, if 200,000 metric

tons of fish equates to one billion – do the math. Just do the math, linear, without having any science background, just do the math and one would say that seals are eating, conceivably – let's just say six days and move it to 14 days – one billion of landed product that we could be developing in rural Newfoundland for the betterment of the province.

Let's say that it is not five billion. There is some out there saying that it should be 10 billion. Bob Hardy would say between five billion and 10 billion. Let's say it's two billion or three billion. It ought to be a pursuit of government to make sure that the fish is not just eaten off our shores. It ought to be landed and there ought to be a market value of the product that we currently have.

I said to the minister this morning – he had said it was different times – in this particular government, since coming into power in 2016, there hasn't been one news release on sealing.

Now, listen, you might say, well there's nothing to report on. If someone could have said well at least you could have put in the changing of the chairs in the House of Assembly that did have seal pelts on them. The only thing I would say is that speaks volumes. We don't have a release on seals, no release since this government here came into power.

Now, go back to 2016 and before, there were numerous there. They were numerous and they were substantive. But that is where we are.

John Efford in 1999, let me give a couple of quotes of John Efford. You'll say that was 23 years ago that he stated: I want to say at the very outset that for three years plus I've been saying there is no larger problem facing the present and future of Newfoundland and Labrador and the very survival of coastal communities of Newfoundland and Labrador than the problem we have with under-biomass resource of fish stocks and an overpopulated seal herd. There is no greater problem facing these communities than that problem in itself.

Now, you should have listened to your colleague and we should have had much more action since '99 to this point in time.

One question I would love to ask, which we never had time in Estimates, would be: What exactly have you done? And that's a fair question. There are pressures and there are things that you can't do. Listen, there are high hurdles that you're going to have to climb here and there are things that are barriers. But we've got to make that first step in making sure that we do get a greater return on our fishery.

The minister had disagreed with the \$5 billion. The only thing I would say to you, I would hope that the decision-makers that are across from me here tonight will think that it has a degree of merit – 200,000 metric tons, \$1 billion for our economy, our landed value. Seals eat it in six days. A depleted stock with an overpopulated herd of seals is going to quickly demise the remainder of some of these stocks. It makes sense. When stocks are plentiful, we haven't got to worry about these seals, I don't think, of making extinct the redfish.

A DFO fish biologist states that he can see, in the next short time, cod on the South Coast becoming extinct in that area. Now, Mr. Swain stated, in a couple of readings and articles, extinct because of the sealing situation that we have. That is alarming.

So here we are with a quota of 450,000 thereof, approximately of seals, and we don't harvest anywhere close to that. I said this morning let's do something; let's incentivize. I don't know if that went over very well. But I'm just saying let's do something to make sure we minimize the seal herd to make sure that we land more product and get more revenue for our province. Rural Newfoundland will thank you for it because I would think at this point in time what's saving our bacon, as was stated by the minister and I would concur, is our shellfish. If something happens to our shellfish by those numbers I just read out to you, we're in trouble.

John Efford called it right. We are in 2022 and if the shellfish industry drops and we lose that price that we get for fish, you tell me what else we're going to harvest from our waters. Seals are plentiful out there; we can harvest seals. What else? So the only thing I would say, that is food for thought.

Another one Mr. Efford says – just to quote – what I am saying is what has happened to the fish stocks? We have caused the fish stocks to collapse. But at the same time we caused the fish stocks to collapse, we stopped hunting seals and the populations of seals exploded. Now it is out of whack; it is out of balance.

I would say to you if anybody – the Member this morning, for Lake Melville, talked about the value of capelin and I forget what he said. It was pretty inspiring.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: Yeah, I know. But he said they were the vegetation of the ocean?

AN HON. MEMBER: Fertilization.

C. PARDY: Fertilizer of the ocean. He is 100 per cent correct; it is.

One fisher from the hon. Member's district out in Green Bay contributed to a slide presentation that I saw on the Rotary session where they opened up one seal and the stomach and they had a five-gallon container of capelin – one seal. And now we're going to close down for fishers when we have a herd out there of 10 million that is feasting away every day while we sit here in this House and every minute. So the only thing that I would say to you, John Efford may be right: If we don't soon take action, it is going to be too late. And Doug Swain may be correct for the South Coast, but it won't only be the South Coast.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad they were so good to listen to what my colleague had to say. I'm not sure that you'll be as happy with me.

I will start off, though, because I think all of us in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador know how important the fishing industry is to

us. When we joined Canada in 1949, we brought the richest fishing grounds in the world, to Canada. As a matter of fact, history will show you that Canada's value as a fishing nation went up considerably because of that. However, we all know what followed. It followed that the management of that resource became the responsibility of the federal government. And we can sit here all day and argue about that, and I would be one that would say that it hasn't been managed well, similar as my colleague has said, and I would also say to all of us, if we could have an accord for the oil off our shore, then we should have an accord for the fishery off our shore.

We don't need sole management of it; we need joint management of it. We need to be at the table. And I think that's something we could all agree on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I look forward to that fight, I really do, because I believe that everyone in this House would want that same principle. I also believe that the principal beneficiary of our fishing resource should be the people of Newfoundland and Labrador first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We're willing to share, but let's start off looking at our own. And I'll go one step further, to say that the principal beneficiary of the people who are involved in that should be the people who go out on the water every single day and risk their lives to catch that fish. They should be the principal beneficiary. We'll share with everyone; but they're the ones that go out on that water and risk their lives every day. So, again, that's something I think we all value – we are here because of the fishery, and I think we'll be here for a lot longer as a province because of the fishery.

The other thing I'll add to him when he talks about seals. Seals are the wolf of the ocean. They have no enemy. There are no natural predators in our waters that are eating seals. Now maybe if the temperatures keep warming up, we'll get more great white sharks that'll come up. But other than that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah. And a few killer whales, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah. But they're not eating enough.

One of the challenges we have – we have a quota right now. We have a quota, as I understand it, of 450,000. The problem is we have no markets. So as my colleague said, and I will challenge you, it's your challenge to find a way to open up a couple of plants and do some experimental work on developing food products, markets, seal oils and others so we can take advantage of that 450,000 quota that we already have.

We need to harvest that quota. We don't need the federal government's support to do that. They've already given it to us. We just need to get on with it and find a way and harvest it, and put it to use. So that'll be all I have to say about the fishery for now.

I've spoken lots about what's not in the budget. Today, tonight, I'm going to talk about some of the things that are in the budget. We've had a few conversations already about Herders, Herder champions and records and sports; well I would say that the government opposite is setting a few records of their own. As a matter of fact, let's talk about some of their records.

They now have the record for the highest gas prices in the history of our province, and every week they seem to set a new record. Not something that I think you would be proud of in the record books. They have a record for the highest prices in the history of our province for home heating fuel. And again, continue to set records. Again, not something that I am sure the record books should reflect.

We are about to introduce sugar tax. Never before in the history of our province have people had to pay a sugar tax. I challenge anyone in this House to stand up and say that this sugar tax has merit. It is just a tax. Nothing more than a tax. To say that there are no tax increases in this

year's budget is really not true because, in September, we are going to be paying a sugar tax. All of the evidence that our side has been able to find points to nothing that suggests that this will actually do anything to solve body mass index or make significant changes to it.

So I would argue that this is one thing and one opportunity that the government has to make a difference. The budget says change is in the air. I would hope that the Members opposite and the minister in her budget will take some consideration of some of the things that can be changed in her budget. This is just one of them: the sugar tax. That needs to be changed. That needs to be stopped. There is no need to inflict more taxes on the people in Newfoundland and Labrador than they already have to pay.

Some of the highest personal income tax rates for two-person incomes in the \$100,000 a year mark are right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have some of the highest personal income rates in that category. So imagine if you are trying to retain health professionals or encourage people, other professionals, IT people to stay in our province or to move here, you have to have that competitive tax structure in order to do that. You have to have that.

So that is the kind of thing that these people are looking at. I can give you an example right now of a person who moved to Nova Scotia to take the exact same type of job they had in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are turning around; they're getting the exact same pay in Nova Scotia as they got in Newfoundland and Labrador. The only difference is they're taking home \$5,000 more in their pocket in Nova Scotia.

So again, that's part of the things that we need to do. I guess one of the things that bothers me a lot, and I've spoken about it – another record. For the first time in our history as a province, people of Newfoundland and Labrador have to pay to see a primary care provider. When you can't get a doctor, you have to pay to go to see a nurse practitioner. And this is something that, in my opinion, is a violation of the principles of the

MCP program – the fact that we have to actually pay to see a nurse practitioner.

The Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance, the Premier, none of them have been able – with all of their officials – to find a way to be able to pay those nurse practitioners. Other than saying to the people of the province, the seniors of the province, I'm sorry but you have to pay. You have to pay out of your pocket to see a primary care provider. I never would have thought that our medical system in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador would come to that. I really don't.

But that's where it is. I believe it could be fixed. I think it needs to be fixed. I don't think we should be delaying it. I think it needs to happen now. And let's get it done. There have been a number of suggestions made on the health care front, for example. We've talked about reducing the number of health authorities. That's been on again, off again, for a number of years now. It's back on again. We're about to make the change in the number of health authorities.

Some people, at the end of the day, that may be a good thing. But I would suggest that before we focus on the number of administrative or health authorities, we focus on getting one new health information system. Because our health information system looks like Dolly Parton's coat of many colours. It's a patchwork, that's all it is. They do not talk to each other. Health authorities can't speak to each other; their systems don't talk to each other. These are the real challenges.

Now I'm hearing rumours that we're going out with an RFP for a new health information system for the new hospital in Corner Brook. Sounds great, except what are we going to do with a new health information system for a hospital in Corner Brook? How is that going to tie in to the health information systems that exist in the rest of Western Health or even the other parts of the province? Surely, it is time to invest in a new health information system for the entire province.

So if you're going to go out with an RFP, let's do it, but let's do it for the entire province because it is long overdue. Then we can start to talk about the one health record and then we can

have people communicating, and maybe then we can start to figure out where the beds are available and what surgeons are available and some of the other things that we've talked about in this House of Assembly. But that is where we should be going.

Here is another interesting thing: A number of years ago, the government opposite commissioned a report on waste management boards. They have this report now for two or three years – I'm not sure if it is three or two. That report recommended going to one waste management board. I think there may be as many as eight. Imagine, we're standing here today and we have more boards looking after garbage than we do health care. And they're paid; the board chairs of these boards are paid. The board members are paid to attend meetings. All of the board members of the health authorities are volunteers.

So how does that make any sense? Why are we sitting on a report that recommended going to one board for garbage and done nothing about it, but we can now say that we're going to change up the health care system and the number of boards? So again, I wonder, why that has not happened. I would certainly like to understand it a little better.

Now, I have to have a little go at my colleague over there, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, because earlier today – and I respect him for the job he does; it is a tough job and a very tough portfolio – he talked about due diligence and he talked about being responsible for the spending of government money. So I stand here and I say, those are great morals to have and I would hope that everyone would have them. However – there is a but – I still do not understand, standing here, how \$9 million can be allocated to move from a 70-year-old courthouse to renovate a 60-year-old building and spend \$9 million doing it.

My question is simply that: What due diligence was done to decide that this was the best option? What options were considered and how did you arrive at the decision that renovating the 60-year-old building was the best option? Because that is the question. It is not about location, because location becomes one town fighting

against the other. It is about how the decision was made. Certainly, none of the people that work in Justice out in that particular region were aware of it; that this was a decision being made. Certainly, there are lots of questions coming from the people around that facility about how the decision was made.

I would simply ask: Please identify exactly what the process was. I know the Town of Stephenville has written the minister asking for some clarification on the process that was used to select this, what options were considered. I have been told that there was a tender ready to go to put a new elevator system in the current building and it never got issued. Again, I don't understand why that would have happened.

So I seek clarification. You know, any time you are investing money in our region is a good thing, but I still think it should be able to be explained. It should be able to say this is the options we looked at. This is why we have chosen it. This is the plan. All of that is a key, important ingredient when you make a decision to spend taxpayers' money. We have all talked about it in the past.

So \$9 million of taxpayers' money is going to be spent to renovate a 60-year-old building and move out of a 70-year-old building. Again, people simply want to know: How did you arrive at that decision? What analysis was done? How was the budget determined? What other options did you look at? And all of those are legitimate questions. If you can't provide the answers, then that's a problem because those answers should be readily available to the people of the province.

Earlier today we got notice that the Rothschild report won't even be available through ATIPP. The Premier said it would be. The parts that were sensitive would be redacted, but today we received notification that the Rothschild report will not be released in no way, shape or form.

Imagine, we spent \$5 million of taxpayers' money on a report that we have no intention of ever releasing to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. How is that accountability? How

is that transparency? If there are sensitivities, we understand that. But surely not every single page in that report is sensitive and will result in somehow or other disclosing critical financial information. What is concerning is the fact, as I just said, that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, who paid for this report, will not be able to see it.

That's the ruling that came out today. I'm sorry, people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we trust you enough to vote for us, but we don't trust you enough with the information that we've received because we don't want to disclose it to you. There's something fundamentally wrong with that. Fundamentally wrong that at the end of the day. The people of the province, it is their money, it is their dollars, and I would think that we should be able, should not be afraid, should be willing to share with them what we've found out as a result of that.

Finally, before I close, I wanted to talk about again – go back to that principle of change is in the air. There is a real opportunity here – we, on this side, can't make adjustments to the budget, but you can. Do not be afraid to listen to some of the opinions that you hear from this side of the House. Do not be afraid of the suggestions that are being made. Do not be afraid to say, you know what? Maybe we can do things a little differently.

There is significant flexibility in that budget. Millions of dollars worth of flexibility, as a matter of fact, that things can be adjusted. We don't need to have a sugar tax. We can do something about a rebate program for our citizens. Because I have to believe that at the end of the day, it's not simply the people on this side of the House who are getting those concerns about the high cost of gasoline and the high cost of home heat fuel. I have to believe that it's impacting you and your constituents, and you are getting those calls.

So I would simply ask that you take an opportunity at the end of this as we all stand up and talk about options. Don't make the change because the PC Party wants the change; don't make the change because the independents want the change; don't make the change because the NDP want the change. Make the change because

the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want you to make the change. They need your help. So I would simply ask: Please, take another look; find a way. The money is there. As they say in the Nike commercial: Just do it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's indeed an honour again on this evening session of the House of Assembly to stand with my colleagues and talk to the 2022-2023 budget.

As I mentioned one time before when I spoke to the budget, this is my 40th budget that I've either been directly or indirectly connected to. And I've seen a lot of things in my lifetime. In my lifetime as a civil servant and as somebody in the not-for-profit sector, and sat in the House of Assembly many times when budgets were being read and happened to be part of some of the processes prior to that.

But I want to acknowledge for the people at home who are watching now because it may be a little convoluted, what we are really debating right now, at what level we are at when it comes to the budget itself. Right now we're debating a subamendment that we had put forward as the Opposition. And what my colleague for Harbour Main had put forward in regard to the debate on the budget.

Right now, we're at stage three. Stage one would be the budget itself and the discussion on the budget. Then there was an amendment to the budget that was put forward and debated, and now a subamendment to the budget.

The process that's used here is for the Opposition to be able to outline, from their perspective, what they've heard from their constituents, what they've heard from various people and organizations around the province where they feel there are gaps in services that need to be provided; or where there could be other better ways that the monies could be

channelled to address the needs, particularly of people.

But before I get into that, I do want to outline one specific thing here. I'm 120 per cent confident that due diligence in addressing the process for a budget was totally done by the minister and her officials, by all the bureaucrats – I know I was one; I had time to look at that. No doubt all the numbers were added up and put in the proper categories and looked at where you could get the best return on it.

The challenge that we are having and what we are hearing is that it didn't go far enough to address the particular needs or some of the needs that needed to be addressed were lumped in with other things. The minister is true when she says most of the additional revenues that are being generated right now, because of the increase in oil, have gone back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Not disputing that; 100 per cent. I don't even disagree that that's not a good thing in a normal circumstance. The unfortunate thing is that this is not a normal circumstance; that the cost of living index has dramatically increased so much that the most vulnerable, the people on fixed incomes are most dramatically affected.

Would we all like to have a break on tax? Sure. We got that. There is some evidence of that here. I'll acknowledge that, some good evidence of that. But we also acknowledge the fact that there is money to be invested in certain areas that could help generate and stimulate the economy, and they are great things to do. But this is a unique situation that dictated a unique approach.

You know, giving a break on the cost of your registration of your vehicle is great, and across the board it seems fair and it makes sense. But in the case of somebody who financially can afford that extra \$90, that break is welcome, but it doesn't change their life. It does change it for somebody on a fixed income. Somebody who has to make the decisions around heating their home; making decisions around the medications that they may be able to take; making decisions around the quality of food they can do; or even the social things that they would like to do.

So we will never – you will hear us – we will never attack the government that they spent frivolously. In this case, I don't see any evidence of that in this budget right here. What we are saying is prioritizing and picking what would have been the best approaches to dealing with certain issues. I think every cent is welcome by the people that they're savings, that is going to certain areas, but we found – and I've travelled to nine communities in two weeks, right around this beautiful province of ours. I do want to acknowledge to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure when I did go down with the Brazil-mobile, down in St. Alban's, I was very welcomed and accepted and the 200 people loved to see my picture travel down that – and it's a beautiful highway.

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible) St. Alban's.

D. BRAZIL: I only got that far yet. I will be coming back further.

E. LOVELESS: Come on down.

D. BRAZIL: I'll be right down to Harbour Breton and English Harbour East and West and all around. I will get to see them all.

But I do acknowledge that there are investments in infrastructure here; there are improvements. But I will acknowledge one thing that the minister said, and I know because I have the unique situation on this side of being the only person who served in Cabinet in the Official Opposition. The only person who understands – and I shouldn't say understands, but lived, that it's not as simple as people think about making decisions and spending money that you don't have. You have to prioritize.

AN HON. MEMBER: He was a good minister.

D. BRAZIL: I'm glad some people thought I was a good minister. I think most on your side who were around in my day would have thought I was a good minister. Maybe not all on this side, maybe not all on this side. Not my honoured colleague there from Mount Pearl - Southlands.

But my intent of saying that is that I realize when you're in Cabinet – and I know all Members of the House of Assembly, we're all 40 equal, but when you're into the decision-making process, trying to find the right mix, the right balance and trying to prioritize certain things becomes a challenge. As a minister, your first priority, when you get in that Cabinet room, is to the ministry that you have responsibility for, because it's your budget you're responsible for. You're trying to outline why the programs and services and where you want that money to go is a priority over another colleague's spending.

That becomes a balancing act there because everybody still is answerable to the money they have. You're going in trying to dictate what is important in acknowledging the responsibilities you have, but in actually providing the services that are necessary. So I get that.

One of the things that I've changed my mindset on in the last four months at least, I've disagreed now with some of my colleagues on this side and some other people and some big agencies, I don't think we necessarily have a spending issue. We have a revenue issue. I've yet to find our spending is not in accordance with what people need. Not necessarily what they want, but what they need.

I mean, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure would outline he could use another \$200 million just to address his bridge issues. I know that. The Minister of Health could use a billion dollars to address some of those particular issues. I know every line department here could use it. Education could use it to do things and all the other line departments here. The issue becomes around how do we generate the additional revenues to be able to provide the services people need? Not necessarily what they want – need.

One of the issues becomes around getting our fair share. That brings me back to our subamendment here. That's what our subamendment is about here; it's acknowledging the fact that more has to be done by all of us, but particularly by the government who has the responsibility and the ability to lobby their federal counterparts to get additional monies that we're entitled to as part of this Confederation

from the federal government. If it's in equalization, if it's in other types of transfers, if it's in other partnerships in development. If it's in some other specific initiative that could be done.

I know we have them in Municipal Affairs. We have joint partnerships that work there. We know we have them in other line departments that work and they are very valuable. We know we have them in health care.

The issue that we have, and we're hearing from the people of this province, is that we're not getting our fair share and we're saying – not that we're not getting our fair share, but basing it on a particular formula that 95 per cent of the time is based on population doesn't address the issue and it isn't fair. Don't forget, this province was around long before the rest of this country was settled. So 500-plus years dictate that our geography is totally different. The demographics are totally different and, as a result, so are some of the challenges around how we provide services and even some of the issues that we have around health care.

So just to blanketly say, based on your population, here is the amount of money you would get becomes a challenge. No different than it is with infrastructure, municipal affairs – our municipalities are spread across a vast area. The geography dictates it is not as simple to invest – what you get for \$1 million in Toronto in infrastructure in the sense of being able to do something with the ground; it might take you \$2 million here because of the nature of bedrock and all the other challenges you may have here. Or the shoreline, for example, with the surges we have. Or the wind issues we may have. So just on a blanket concept doesn't work well for us in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The concept of transfer payments were based on the principle, as I always understood them, in economic downturns when your economy is down is when you're entitled to a transfer, not just because your population is at a certain level. We see in Quebec, Quebec runs a surplus budget and still gets \$13 billion in transfer payments and cuts their taxes annually for individuals. While in this province, taxes are having to change in an upward swing consistently to try to meet the financial demands in this province.

So there is a problem and that is what this subamendment talked about. The failure to be able to deliver on what we should be entitled to; we shouldn't even have to fight for this. There should be an agreement already in play that says the formula for supports for our province are based on these things.

The big thing that it should be based on is the economics. The economics dictate that if we're generating enough revenues to provide adequate service – we're not saying better services but we're not saying worse services – adequate services for the people of this province. Meaning that if somebody in another province travels 35 kilometres or 50 kilometres to get a provided service in health care or education, than we should be in that same range. It doesn't have to be exactly and we're never saying that we need to have better service than other people. We need to have adequate services in Newfoundland and Labrador that would provide the service that people would need.

But to do that people need to understand and accept, particularly federally, that there are some unique challenges in Newfoundland and Labrador. We'll argue about there's wastage in everything we do and there's more efficient ways we can do stuff and there are things we'll challenge. I have no problems. People challenged us when we were in government, they'll challenge us again when we get back in government.

But what I'm saying here is that there's no big, glaring indication that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians just waste money for the sake of wasting it. No administration, I've never seen that – we try stuff that may work out or it may not work out. We try things that you won't recover the real benefits for years down the road. But for us to be labelled federally as saying here's all you're going to get, just enough to keep you from dire straits.

It was noted here before, a former premier did write a letter; there was a challenge here. There was a major challenge financially. A lot of that was based, not on our overspending – people can say all that, but we know it wasn't. The minister will know in Finance, it wasn't that because we're generating fairly close to what it needs.

Most provinces run deficits. Some years they'll bring it up. We're reliant on certain income streams; the oil industry, the mineral industry, tourism industry, fishing industry. Even the forest industry and aquaculture and all these things. When one falters, it has an impact. When three or four falter the one time, like has happened the last couple of years, it has a major impact on all of us. It has an impact on what we're bringing in.

So to still be able to be fairly stable, speaks volumes. But if we were given the same opportunities as other provinces, if we were given the same acknowledgement that we have a unique set-up here, to give some extra supports, it would put us over that threshold. It would give any administration the ability to be flexible on other things and prioritize the things that they need to do, and address certain issues and knock off the things that we're behind on – if it's in health care on surgeries, if it's in investment in businesses and giving businesses a break, if it's supports for seniors, if it's about our infrastructure and our road networks and our bridge networks, if it's about other supports for special needs adults or children, whatever it may be that would give it.

But it doesn't work if we don't get that fair shake from Ottawa. That's what we've been asking for, for the last number of years. Listen; when I was on that side, the Opposition said the same thing, that we need to lobby. I know there are premiers who have gone and there are ministers who've gone and argued the points and negotiated the points. I know we've been successful sometimes and not so successful other times.

I don't think we should have to be doing that, no matter what administration. There should be a common respect out of Ottawa, for whoever is there, because we go up and we advocate. We can advocate collectively as a group, as the Members of the House of Assembly, all 40 of us, that this is what we feel is right and just for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We're not asking for more than anybody else, but we're not willing to accept less than anybody else either, based on our needs and based on what we've proven to be supportive of in this Confederation.

So we've talked about that, and we've all seen it where we came back with \$2 billion cheques in hand. We've seen it where there have been agreements around rate mitigation and the supports there. I get all that. But I would think and I would hope that somewhere along the way, in the next number of years, sitting in this House we come up with a collective approach to Ottawa that says, no matter what administration is there or what administration is in this House, here are the standards that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians expect when it comes to services; here is what we propose would be an equitable process in evaluating what we are entitled to here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Don't just base it on population, because as we've seen we have a decreasing population, we have an aging population and we have all kinds of challenges. Base it on other things. Base it on the natural resources that we have here and what that means to this country, what that contributes back. Think of the billions, the tens of billions, hundreds of billions of dollars that have gone back to this country because of the resources that we've had here. So that must account for something at the end of the day.

So we're just asking for some fairness here, and that's what we're talking about here. This is what our challenge is on this, why we have a challenge with this budget. Not because of what it's offering in it, or what it's not offering as much, as what it could've done. What other gaps in services that it could've filled that it didn't in this case. And I get it, it couldn't. You can only spend X number of dollars, that's all you have to do.

The issue that we've argued to is that we need to be able to find the resources and the revenues that provide the services that are necessary. One of the gaps in that is not over-taxation, is not overzealous taxation of people. That doesn't help; that doesn't stimulate the economy. I'd rather be able to take \$50 million and invest it in the business initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador so they create more jobs and more taxation and more industries as part of that. But to do that, we need a partner in this game and the partner has to be Ottawa on every angle.

Not every now and then giving us what they consider a handout. And that's how it's

proposed to us: a handout to keep us happy because we have a challenge. What it should be, it should be about the equality of having us as a partner and giving us our fair share. So again, I want to stimulate the economy based on let's develop a partnership nationally. Not just coming down every now and then when it's a bailout, when they consider it a bailout because it might be embarrassing to them if something happens.

We talk about, on one side of it, hydroelectric power is going to be the mainstay. Canada will be able to stand up for green energy – and very rightfully so; we welcome it. Have no illusion, I spoke to it in this House and still would speak that I think there are other initiatives under green energy and the environment that we could very much speak to and invest in that would be beneficial to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The issue now becomes the rest of the country would like to use us for that example and we want to be part of that. But we want to be part of it as a partner. So invest in what we need here; treat us equally; make sure that our citizens are safe and healthy and educated so we'll help this country get to where it needs to go to be the global leaders when it comes to green energy, to environmental friendliness and environmental stewardship.

But don't just piecemeal when it is convenient for the rest of the country. That is not how it works. I am not going to pick on Quebec but I do have to acknowledge, our relationship with them, at times, is cantankerous. At best, it is tolerance and not on our part because I think we are very open. I said, even when we are not in the best of friends, we are very professional. That's Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will work with people. We will find ways to make things work. That responsibility comes on both sides. I say both sides: the federal side and the provincial side.

So when I talk about then – so the people at home would understand what we are doing now because they might say, but you have been talking about this continuously. You know what? We have changed. There are three things. It's the budget itself where we had an

opportunity, after the minister presented it, to look at what is in it and we have acknowledged there are some good things in there that we applauded. There are some things there we're not quite sure; they might work out. We are hopeful. There are some things there that we're feeling really didn't hit the mark and then we know there is a number there that are some gaps in services that we need to find a way to fill those gaps because we are now hearing, maybe even stuff that we weren't aware of – and with all due respect to everybody here, maybe we haven't faced them.

But since I have been travelling and my colleagues have been travelling here and the budget has come out – and I suspect Members on both sides are getting the same thing. They are hearing some of the challenges. I know things have happened like the price of fuel has dramatically gone up and I know we can't directly control that. I get that. But there are things we can control, and my colleague noted some of the things we can around taxation and some of the other supports around rebates and some of the other supports around the most vulnerable, offsetting some of those costs. And I get that.

What I want to make clear to the people at home, we have had the budget speech. We are going to go back to the budget debate. That will happen – before the budget is fully voted on, every Member of this House of Assembly will get an opportunity to speak to it, what they feel, their views on it, even some suggestions that could be put in play that would be of benefit to them.

I know a number of my colleagues have said over here, listen, we are here to collaborate, and we have said that from day one. We are here to make suggestions. Some of them may have come from the people over on this side. Some have come, definitely, from our constituents. Some have come from constituents from ministers and the Members of the Liberal Party. We are all one big part of this great province of ours, so everybody's view should be taken into account and, as a result, hopefully, we come up with a happy medium that works, that is

affordable, that has the time frames it does and meets the outcomes that we are looking for.

There's no doubt there are going to be some groups that are not happy with it, and I get that. But our priority should be right now that – we're in a crisis for two years with COVID and we're just now transitioning out of that. I know there are going to be things that will challenge us, the new norm will be something we were never expecting and there may even be a cost associated with it.

But we're also in another crisis now. We're in an economic crisis for people's own ability to stabilize their quality of life. Not improve it, but stabilize it, because there are people making decisions about what they can and cannot afford and that's heart wrenching. Particularly when we know, in a lot of cases, these are the most vulnerable or the people who have given most of their lives, because now they're seniors on fixed incomes. So we have a responsibility to address those particular needs and find whatever is necessary to alleviate that for the near future.

I, like, I think, everybody in this House see there's a future for Newfoundland and Labrador. I see it on the Burin Peninsula, the Connaigre Peninsula and the Northern Peninsula. I see it in Labrador. I see it in the urban centres. I see it in Central Newfoundland and Western Newfoundland. It's everywhere. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have the resolve, but they also have the ability and the resources to make this a great place to be and a place where it's not overburdening to be able to get certain basic services or to be able to have a quality of life.

So before I end, I just wanted to note a couple of other things. We had talked about this amendment. This amendment is about, at the end of the day, before we vote on the budget, we want to make it clear that this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that we're so proud to be part of has to do everything possible so that we don't have our citizens leaving. We heard heart-wrenching stories about people this week saying, I don't know, if I have to go out of the province for health care, maybe it's better I live somewhere else. Having people say well,

my plan was to move back to Newfoundland and Labrador after retire, I don't know anymore.

We have to make this the engaging place where I know they want to stay and where they want to come back to. We can collectively do that. We have to get on the right page, consistently. Part of that would be looking at the subamendment here. Finding a way to let Ottawa know that, not only do we deserve more but we want to more a part of this Confederation by getting back to what would make Newfoundland and Labrador a sustainable province and continue to keep contributing to this province or this country.

We talked about the Bay du Nord, and I go back to that because that really, to me, was an eye-opener, that the future of this province, the future of the people, this generation and the generations to come, hinged on a couple of people's views in a federal Cabinet. That was very worrisome. Very worrisome to me and to the tens of thousands of people who reached out to us, very much so. We need to find a better mechanism here to ensure that.

Now, are there checks and balances? One hundred per cent. Do we, should we, are we committed to being cognizant of the environment? One hundred per cent, without a doubt. And that no company, no big industry, no outsider should have control over what we're doing here.

We talked to the trades union people and they talk about a community benefits package. That has to be for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, it has to be for the companies in Newfoundland and Labrador and it has to be for the communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. We can make that happen here in this House.

So what we're saying in this part of the amendment is about getting a fair shake. Collectively, getting to Ottawa, either convincing them or forcing them, whatever mechanism we have to use. I would hope it would be collaboratively convincing them that our stake in Confederation is not only beneficial to us but it's extremely beneficial to the rest of this country. So we talk about that.

I just want to note a couple of things that we've talked about in the past. You know, there are all kinds of good ideas. We had a Blue Book that we put out prior to an election, we update it every year so that it's modern and it reflects the needs of individuals or organizations or the will of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. But we talked about a lot of things.

I'm just going to note a number. Who takes them and modifies them or implements them exactly as they are, who takes credit for them, it's immaterial to us over here. The benefit right now is that it improves the lives of people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what it's totally about. I'm just going to note a few things that are in the table of contents that outlines it.

It does three things: It outlines exactly what our vision would be and it's a vision of the people that we've spoken to, which are tens, if not hundreds of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians over the last number of years. But it also talks about how it would be implemented. Some of it is as easy as modifying existing programs. That could have been developed by any party or any administration. The third talks about the costing of these, because anybody can promise anything. We know, we hear, there are parties that will promise everything but don't have a plan on how they can deliver. That becomes the (inaudible). Coming up with a program that reflects the needs of the people, developing it so that it can be implemented and the outcomes will be beneficial. And the third, finding the costing that's effective and frugal and can be sustained. They're the three things.

These are the table of contents so sometime, if anybody at home would like to look at it, you can go on the PC Party webpage and it's called our Blue Book. It's a blueprint for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, but I just want to touch it, because I don't think – we don't have monopoly on this. I know all parties have talked about similar things. We've just outlined what we think would be an approach to it, how it would be done and how it would be financed.

This is what we talked about. We talked about one of the big sustainability ones: It's all about jobs. Creating employment in Newfoundland and Labrador is the key thing. We know when people are employed the revenues that are

generated. We know the sense of community, the sense of hope. We know that people are more physically active and involved. They're more engaged. We know communities become more vibrant. And we know it sends a message around this world that we're trained, we're skilled, we are hard workers and do you know what? We are open for business.

Fighting for fairness is what I just talked about, a new deal with Ottawa and it outlines how that new deal could be achieved. It talks about what it right and equitable and fair. Bringing back jobs: it's talking about jobs that were lost to other jurisdictions in this country that belonged to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It talks about secondary processing. It talks about our resources being utilized for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Lowering taxes equals more jobs. Companies have tax breaks. They invest their money into new equipment which creates more employment. There is taxation for individuals then who are more apt to buy more things within their society which creates more employment.

Putting locals first, I already mentioned that. We talked about a community benefits agreement and we're not just talking trade unions. We're talking about any Newfoundlander and Labradorian who can provide a service in Newfoundland and Labrador, they should be the benefactors and then all the spinoff supports, obviously, benefit the people of this province.

Bring home more people to fill more jobs. We know we have a population challenge in Newfoundland and Labrador. I see help wanted. It's amazing. I told a story forty something years ago when I went to university – 43 years ago – trying to get a job. I put in 106 resumes. I used to get two hours work at Sobeys a week. That is all and that was just by luck. Now, you could have two jobs a day if you wanted them in Newfoundland and Labrador

So that speaks volumes. It tells me the potential is here. But it tells me we have a gap in being able to fill those potential services. So if it means immigration, which is a great thing, let's keep doing that. It's great; we have some good

strategies. I acknowledge what we are doing in Ukraine. Let's keep doing what we need to do to get people here, but we have – and we all know it – tens of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians all over this country. Let's find a way to get some of them back to Newfoundland and Labrador also in their communities that they are comfortable with, providing the services that they are already skilled at. There are ways that this can be done.

Educating to complete. You know, we've talked about it and I'm so happy – I have to acknowledge in the budget and I have to acknowledge the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education. I have been arguing for 12 years, since I have been elected, that in my District of Conception Bay East - Bell Island, the largest community, which is now the eighth largest community out of the 200-plus municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, doesn't have a complete education system.

We had an elementary school chocked to the rafters, beyond exploding, 450 people – 790 in it with cubicles all over the parking lots. We have since negotiated and got built a beautiful junior high school; massive; 650 kids in it; state of the art and beyond. Now busting at the seams. Argued, lobbied back and forth with the Minister of Education, at the school district and all of that, and in this budget, which I think nobody thought because there didn't seem to be any indication there would be investment in the school system infrastructure there but I give credit, vision was seen. In communities that are growing, communities that need it, why would you not have an all-inclusive, complete education system?

So happy to see phase one will start – the design, the site location. That is what we talk about in Newfoundland and Labrador, just a complete education system. Now it doesn't mean every community is going to have three schools in there but it means, within a decent range, you are going to have access to quality schools, where you have a lab and a gymnasium and these types of things.

So we have come a long way and I am fortunate enough, during my reign on that side when we were in government or our part, we built nearly 30 schools and I am glad to see there are three more that will start this process. But I think we are almost at a point now where that is maxed out. We have provided good services to everybody; people are going to have state of the art. There will always be improvements to school system. But now we need that whole, complete process and it might mean changing how our busing system works so people can have access to it; or using virtual education to let people have access to courses that they normally would; or if you can't recruit a teacher that has a specific skill, there are other ways of doing it. So we like that.

Helping parents get ahead – accept \$10 daycare. Wonderful. Challenge – and I will say in my district, I have six daycares. They are busting. We need an ability to be able to get more day cares. The Minister of Education knows because, on a daily basis, I am sending him emails from people from my district and there has been meetings set up with people representing the day care centres, finding ways to be able to make sure that those who need it – \$10 is great but if you can't find a seat or an after-school program in this, we need to be able to find an infrastructure way to do it. So we outlined some of that.

I am glad to see there is movement. That is why I am saying, we don't have a monopoly on this. We never ever had. These are things that other people have been talking about and other parties have already put in place.

Standing up for our energy industry and jobs – well, you know the debate we have had here for the last year and a half: Terra Nova, Bay du Nord; all the other ones that were there; Hibernia to keep continuing to more forward. So we want to make sure that this industry is very viable and very important to us. I understand the green energy and all of these things in the environment, but this is something that is going to be with us for generations. Why would we not maximize the benefits for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly, when are cognizant

of the environment and the ethical work of our workers and the safety of them versus any other jurisdiction in this world of ours?

We will find a way and we will use that money to transition to other industries when it is appropriate. And the ability means those industries are going to be successful too. Whatever they may be, things in the fishing industry, other types of industries that may be very viable also.

You know, making Muskrat Falls work, we have talked about that. I applaud it and I said it before, the mitigation deal, we probably would have done things a bit differently; we would have demanded a few more things from Ottawa, but the fact that we're going to be able to stay at 14.7, which is what we had outlined in our Blue Book, would be a sustainable, affordable level of hydroelectric power for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So that's what we're talking about here: creating clean, green jobs. We're talking about that. Investments in that. I know there are parts of it in the budget here and I understand while it's a priority, it's probably not an immediate priority, and I get why. Because the immediate priority is people's health care, the economy itself, naturally, the cost of living.

But there are some things here – and I say this because it might be some things to look at that you may already be doing, there may be some things here that you want to look at, that you can enhance, or maybe things you can say, we can modify that. Or it might be something you say no, no, no. We tried that and it wouldn't work. Tell us that, too, because when we put this out again, we want to make sure that it's fluent enough that it will work for the people of this province.

More mining jobs – what's happening is we've had the privilege as a caucus to meet with a couple of Central Newfoundland mining companies, and what's potentially happening in the gold industry could be the next – we talk about transitioning. Newfoundland and Labrador, we're transitioning on a daily basis. Transitioning doesn't necessarily mean you go

from one industry to another, it means you transition even within that industry – the mining industry, which was traditionally based on ore.

I know, coming from a mining community, what is happening in Labrador, and what went on in Buchans and all these places, but now we're transitioning into all kinds of other minerals. What we're doing in Labrador, you know, with Inco and all these things. So that's one thing, we have got to be cognizant that our mining industry needs to still be front and centre with all of our other key industries as we look at that.

Growing our fishery industry and making it sustainable – and my colleague had talked about the sealing industry. There are two sides to what he's talking about; one, it's the impact the seals are having on the fishing industry, the detrimental effect, but it's also that we know, and we've been promoting it and trying to, along with a number of other people – I would suspect Members over there are too – that the sealing industry itself is an industry. Finding the markets, finding the value of the meat and every product there, if it's giving to third-world countries for sustainability.

Whatever it is that can be done to help, not only employment in Newfoundland and Labrador, but if we can help other people globally, why wouldn't we do it? While at the same time we know, if the sealing industry is vibrant, then we're also doing something environmentally to benefit our fishing industry. So there's a balance here of being able to do things like that.

Healthy forests and sustainable ecosystems, which means more jobs. Don't forget, the global downturn on newsprint, and I think somebody told me there were 25 mills across North America that's closed. Kruger managed to survive, and I give credit to the industry out there, the individuals, the unions themselves, monies that both governments – I know, I was there. I know what we put in; I know the support on that side. We might be at a point now where maybe we've weathered the storm. Maybe there's an ability now for that mill to even expand beyond what it normally does, because the market out there now may be shrunk, but the competition has dramatically shrunk. So there may be some things there.

So how do we encourage that and keep working with the industry people, particularly with the Kruger family and the management out to the mill? I had a great look at the mill, and still see, while parts of it look like it did 50 years ago, some of the technology in there is second to none, and I know they're still investing. So maybe we keep moving that forward.

We keep the jobs that that creates in Western and Central Newfoundland in the forest industry. I mean people forget about that. People forget about the truckers that benefit from this. They forget about the loggers that benefit. They forget about all the other amenities, support services. We're talking millions and millions and hundreds of millions of dollars that come from an industry that we thought basically was almost dormant, but it isn't. So we need to be able to find a way to keep moving that.

Agriculture: We forget about that, and that's our sustainability. That and the fishery is what brought Newfoundland and Labrador to where it is, what kept us alive. There's an ability to do that very much so. So why don't we continue to do that? I know there are programs and services out there, and I know just in my part of the district, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's is always an agricultural area, and I know it's expanding. Bell Island, we've got a group of five farmers who've come together and now we're working with them to try to find ways to expand what they'd doing. So agriculture in areas like that that are remote and isolated areas, imagine what we can do in the areas that we're used to, the West Coast, for example, in agriculture. Let's keep promoting that and moving that to the next level.

Revitalizing tourism: I felt so bad for tourism the last two years. Absolutely nothing anybody could do. There was nothing we could do. I know, part of my district, Bell Island, perhaps one of the top 10 tourism attractions, but it was decimated, literally. Will they survive? Yeah, I give credit. Some supports from different levels of government, some creativity on being able to keep stuff afloat. This could be our year to revitalize it. The Come Home Year, accept that. It's there to go. Now we have to make sure it works.

I know we've had some discussions with the Minister of Service NL about the transportation

industry here, the taxi industry. We're getting closer to solving some of the challenges that may be part of it. We know the airline industry – I give credit that the airports themselves now are getting ready. I happened to be in two in the last couple of weeks and talked to their managers, and they're getting prepared for what needs to be done here. They're getting prepared for meeting the needs of tourists and being able to make it an engaging, attractive visit for them.

There are going to be some challenges, but, I think, before the real crux – we have a month to really figure what they are and address it. I know car rentals are an issue. I'm travelling out of the province for a few days later on and there is no difference from other places. We just have to find creative ways. I know we're working with companies to make that happen, so I'm hoping we can fix some of the wrinkles and get everything in play. So we compliment everybody in the industry for doing what has to be done to make that happen.

Unlocking Labrador's potential: We know what the Big Land has to offer from every perspective. We know that 100 per cent, but we also know that we need to do it collaboratively with the people of Labrador, with Indigenous communities there. It has to be a balance of engagement by all and a buy-in by all. But the potential in that land for economic development, for cultural development, for our promotions of who we are is enormous. So we need to maximize that and make that work, and that comes with collaboration, it comes with supporting each other as we work towards that.

Achieving equality for women: We've had quite a debate in this House in the only two months that we've been here and that has to be front and centre. I know we need to do it, find ways to engage more females into politics, but it's about equality. Equality can be very standard if we all accept it and breakdown any barriers that are there. I know the discussion here has been about it. I know there are organizations here and I know there's been great strides made to try to do that. But we need to continue to do it. It can't be on some of the things that we criticize government; it can't be five- or 10-year plans. It has to be immediate plans. There has to be immediate interventions to ensure that it all works across the board.

Protecting the most vulnerable: I would suspect every person who stood up on either side of this House have talked about the most vulnerable. There are those who are in need, financially, who are vulnerable health-wise and who are seniors, who for years, have contributed to our society; who've given us everything to help make Newfoundland and Labrador what it is today so we need to find ways. If it's special needs adults or children. If it's certain things that are needed in our society, we need to make that happen for them.

Learning from COVID: We did a great job. I think, collectively, we did a great job. We were in unchartered territory. I remember first when this broke there was six of us sat in the Premier's boardroom and we had no idea. We looked at Dr. Fitzgerald as if to say guide us. I know she was learning the process, too, from here colleagues across the country and around the world. But we managed to maneuver through it.

I know there are some challenges now; it's unfortunate. At this end of it, when we thought we were getting over it, it becomes the most vulnerable who are being affected the most, physically. Unfortunately, we're losing more people than we would have ever expected or hoped. So it's a learning curve. We need to find ways to prepare for it. We've outlined things here that would be beneficial, that if we ever run into that again, that we're prepared in advance. Being proactive versus reactive.

Better health access for better health outcomes. Every day we talk about it here, every night we hear from people. We have to find a way to provide the proper health care in a timely fashion that people need so that we're going to get the outcomes that we need in this province, which includes access to medical interventions right away, access to emergency processes and access to assessments in a timely fashion so that the outcomes are better, which means people become more productive. And do you know what it means from an economic point of view? While we may spend more money on the front end, we're going to save twice that on the back end and provide a better quality of life for the people of this province.

Reinvigorating municipalities: I know there's a lot of discussion here about regionalization. I see the value of that discussion. I do say, and I know my colleagues over here have said it, there's not a one-size-fits-all concept here. We've had conversations with the Federation of Municipalities, we've had it with the municipal administrators and we've had some real good discussion about how it could work. I do acknowledge the minister and the roundtables that she's been having across the province, because engagement is where you're going to solve the problems.

We, in this House, know a little bit about a few things; the people out there know a lot about everything related to them. So we need to engage them, find a solution that works, find how we provide services that better fit the needs of a particular region and that the taxpayers can afford. There's not one taxpayer that's willing to pay more taxes for less services and it's not somebody else who doesn't pay any taxes now, willing to pay any taxes for no services.

So it's that balance. But I'm confident that there is a balance out there, and the process that is put in place and the engagement, we'll find that. We outline some of the recommendations here. I'm happy to see some of them are already being enacted by your administration. So well done there.

Cleaning up corruption. We've talked about that when it comes to issues in our society around tenders, bidding and some of the other issues, that we need things here that reflect the people have faith in what we do, that everything is transparent and open. And that's very easy to do; we've all adopted that here. We've signed documents around minimizing impact on people, about harassment, about transparency and accountability. Now we have to live up to it. And we have to then ask the rest of society to live up to it. It is the business community, nationally, internationally and particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador because we're all part of it, we all benefit when that happens.

Last but not least, our commitment to fiscal responsibility. Again, and I said it before, we can't spend frivolously. We can't waste money. We need to do due diligence. We need to actually anticipate, when we can, what will be

the reaction or the outcome if we do this. Sometimes it makes sense, and I will acknowledge that we talk about the cataract surgery on the West Coast. I personally believe if we invested \$1 million or \$2 million now, we would save tens of millions down the road by having that issue out of the way, having those patients that are backlogged now get back to their quality of life. It would also help eliminate some other potential medical issues that are attached to it and at the end of it they are more productive, they are more engaged. We are going to save money.

Now, I know to spend that money you have got to have it. So we have got to find creative ways to generate that particular amount of money to address issues that save us money on the back end.

We are talking about fiscal responsibility, and again we will criticize some of the contracts that have been let. We will criticize some of the consultants that are in. I would hope at the end of it what comes out of it is the benefit. I have no qualms or no problems if we spend money upfront, but I'm convinced and we are convinced that we are going to gain either a better quality of services or we are going to financially save money or make the right decision.

So on that note, I want to say this subamendment that my colleague brought in is about us getting our fair share in this Confederation. If we get our fair share and we equitably work together and collaboratively work together and I mean together – all citizens, all businesses, all of the entities in this province – Newfoundland and Labrador has a bright future and the people of this province will be proud to be here. They will encourage their expats to come here and they will encourage immigration to this great province of ours.

But to do that, we need to first have a proper debate and understand exactly what the intent of this budget is and be open that there are gaps. We have identified them because the people have identified them to us. Find ways to rectify those gaps in services. Make sure that the people get what they need in this province and the

people have faith in the people of this House of Assembly so that we have a bright future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that and I look forward to further debate on the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate another good opportunity to stand up in this House and represent the District of Ferryland; it's certainly a great privilege.

I was going to start on the seal fishery tonight. The last time I spoke on the seal fishery, relevance came up so I'm going to get away with it tonight, but I don't know if I want to follow my colleague from Bonavista because he articulated pretty well. I don't know how I could touch on it any better, but I will certainly give it a little chance.

I live in a town in Bay Bulls. Thirty years ago, if you saw a seal down by the wharf that was a big issue, a big thing. I don't think they saw it that evening, he would be gone; somebody went down and shot him. No question about it, it happened.

You drive up through Renews right now, and I'm trying to tide in – you know, one time, you didn't see them; now you see them everywhere. Drive up to Renews at low tide and there are 50 seals sitting on a rock in the sunshine. And they aren't going to McDonald's to get something to eat. They're coming in up the rivers and they're eating the salmon, and they're eating the fish and they're eating the capelin.

So we realistically have to do something about the seals in this area. There's no question. I look at the minister and he's talking about a billion-dollar industry; it's great. No question about it, it's a billion-dollar industry. But what we as Fisheries departments for the last 30 years have done to generate that is nothing. Federally does it – the fishermen go out and catch it; what do we do provincially for it? It all happens. We take

credit for it, but we don't do anything more to develop it. Because we don't have any say in it.

And that's our problem. And it's not his problem, but I bet you on this side if we had to start a seal harvest, that the Opposition here would definitely back you 100 per cent if you went to Ottawa to do something with the seals in Newfoundland and Labrador. Because it's a big issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: It just wouldn't survive. I went to Chance Cove last year during COVID, had to go for a walk, you go out and you go down in Chance Cove up in between Trepassey and down in Cappahayden, and walk down there, and I'm going to say in June or July, you see three or four seals bobbing up and down in the water. You do the same up in Cappahayden, the same – you never seen them. Now it's a big issue in all the districts.

I grew up in a fishing community. In 1992, July 2 – it was my birthday – that's when the fishery was announced and shut down. I was 26. So it was on my birthday; you wouldn't forget it, for sure. We live in an industry – when we were there then – so there were four boys in the family, and my mother and father. We were all affected by the fishery when it shut down – everybody. We're still going today; we're not going to lie down and die. We're going to keep going, we're going to figure things out, we're going to move on to something else, and that's what we did.

I worked in the fish plant and 6 in the evening, you wanted to go play softball, I couldn't go. We were working; that's what we had to do. I said to my mom: I'm not going to be at this for a living, because I want to go play softball. I'm not staying in the fish plant to go working. Eventually we did that and we moved on, but there were six people in one household that was affected.

We're still living in the area, and we moved on. Right now, there is no fish plant in Bay Bulls – none, nothing there, gone. Now it's oil. Right now we've got the rig in Bay Bulls, just sitting there; I think it's going to go offshore in the next week or two. I'm not sure of the exact date, I'm

sure somebody on the other side knows when it's going to move, but it's up there now and it's lit up in the harbour. It's a beautiful sight to see, if you ever drive up there, last night with a little bit of fog settling down on her. It's just so nice for the area, just to see that there.

And that's only sitting there yet. That's not gone to work yet. That's going to do some drilling, going to drill a couple of wells, supposedly. Just in the port in Bay Bulls, there are boats in there the last two or three weeks – my brother works down there now. They're hauling chain aboard that boat that's going offshore to Hibernia, and it's going to wherever it needs to go. But just speaking to the tourism – and they're going to benefit, too. They have an oil rig in the harbour and how often do you to sail by an oil rig, for the next week or two, that you can do on a boat tour and go sail by an oil rig and be able to see it sitting there in the harbour? It's pretty spectacular to see. Last week I think they lowered it 40 feet down, so it's up in the air and they lowered it 40 feet down.

We were speaking to somebody the other night and they were talking about how did they get it over here. Did they tow it over? They didn't realize that it drove over itself. It floated over here and it maneuvered over here to – people brought it here. It didn't get towed here; it actually moves on its own. People thought that it all got towed here from Norway or wherever it was at the time. But again, it's great for the industry.

Speaking to, as I said earlier, tourism, the person there in the harbour, he's bringing people back and forth to the oil rig, along with the people that own the marine terminal there, plus there's another boat that's bringing people back and forth. Speaking to the gentleman that has the tourism there, he said that for every job that's offshore, there's probably four or five spinoff jobs. He told me it might be not even as little as that, it might be way more than that, but there are at least four or five spinoff jobs for every job that's off there, just based on that. I said, wow, you're thinking about that, and it's a big number.

It started on the seal fishery, then to the regular fishery and now we're off to oil and gas, all in

one community. So it certainly can happen, and things can certainly change.

I'd like to touch a little bit on the roads in my district. I've certainly done it on petitions, along the way, touched on Witless Bay Line and spoke to the minister on different occasions about paving, ditching and brush cutting. I look at one area in St. Shott's and it's called the Irish Loop. It goes right around and joins the whole loop – absolutely beautiful. It will be well travelled again this year when the whales come up in St. Vincent's. It's a big thing now that you can drive and look at the whales instead of having to get in a boat. I mean, it's blocked up there. But the road in that area – I had it marked here – it's 36 years since that road has been done up there. So to see the condition – and everybody have roads in their district, I do realize that, but it is a part of the Irish Loop and we'd love to see that to be completed somewhere along the way here. I get so many calls on that area – so many calls.

People, when they leave either Trepassey or St. Shott's, they don't drive down the shore a lot of times, they drive down the Salmonier Line because the roads are way better over in the Liberal district than they are in the PC district right now, and I'd like to see that changed. But it is what it is, and we will get our share somewhere along the way I'm sure, and you have a budget that you have to keep to, but we would love to see that in our area get completed.

Because we have got so much tourism there. You have got Mistaken Point down in Portugal Cove South that's a real big industry. I just spoke to a gentleman – probably a couple of weeks ago – and he has got 300 or 400 bookings already for this year. That's only probably four or five, five or six years ago that that was claimed as a UNESCO site. I think it was five or six years ago.

It is going to be a big tourism area for sure, but you hear people in the area saying that they come up here with campers and trailers and you tow them along. They tell people in the district when they are in these convenience stores or Foodlands, wherever it may be, that they don't know if they would come back because the conditions of the road. When they are saying

that then, they are not passing that on to people that they talk to as encouraging them to go to that area. That's a big tourist area that we need to work on.

Again, they suffered so much during COVID – all tourism. In Bay Bulls, we had two boat tour operations and they combined one week – and then they both had employees. So they didn't have enough visitors and most of their visitors, I am going to say, 90 or 95 per cent are from out of province. So to rely on people from the local area to go – They had, again, people working and I don't know how many people they have got working each, but they are trying to get employment for all of these people to be able to get EI when they are finished after October. So they combined. One week it would be one boat tour and the next week it would be the other boat tour. So they sort of made it work during COVID, which was good to see and I'm pretty sure they will probably be doing their own thing this year if it all goes well with Come Home Year. So we are looking forward to that as well in the area.

I'll touch on electric vehicles because I came from the car industry. I spoke to someone the other day dealing with vehicles. She is selling vehicles in one of the dealerships. I won't say where and it is not where I worked. She said there is three electric vehicles coming in before the end of the year – three. Plus it is hard to get a vehicle right now. We all know that because of the computer chips and all of that – three vehicles. I know there are rebates out there. I never asked the cost of these vehicles. I can guarantee you and I hear some advertisements on the radio – the minimum, when I was at it, was \$40,000. That was the minimum.

It was nice to say you could do it but once I drove to Bay Bulls and back, you had better plug it in. I think the range was 250 kilometres. So to offer these rebates to the low income to try to get away from oil, yes, I see that is certainly a good plan. It is just hard to understand for these people to get from oil to go to electric or go to heat pumps or go to mini-splits in their house and as one of the Members said here today, to

get a \$5,000 rebate it's going to cost you \$20,000.

I had a person in Bay Bulls – I was driving on my ATV with a helmet on – I stopped and spoke to buddy, he said to me, you know, it's going to cost him \$20,000. He couldn't do it. He just couldn't do it. It's not affordable for him. He's retired now. He said he just cannot afford to do it. So at some point in time people are going to be forced to do it, because they're going to be forced out, this is not going to happen the next couple of years. I'm going to say it's going to take 30 to 40 years.

The way it's going now, I mean, it's going to go quicker than that, I hope, but it's not just going to stop overnight. You look at people that are using chainsaws and lawnmowers. Yes, you can get them all electric, but they're not readily available yet. I'm sure that it will come. But a fellow with a chainsaw, he's going to need about six kilometres of extension cord to go in the woods to cut a bit of wood. I mean, it makes no sense. It just don't make any sense.

But we're going to get there. It's going to take time. Again, in Fermeuse and up in Trepassey, they both have electric charging stations right now, so that's where it's going to be. But that's reality. I mean, people are talking about it. You see fellas in cutting wood and you see fellas in driving Ski-Doos and driving bikes, I don't know that's a long ways off to me.

Yes, we've got to get there, and I agree with it. I do my part. I've been doing my part since the kids were in school; I've been recycling bottles and they haven't touched them. They started in kindergarten. They wanted to recycle bottles. I've been doing it ever since. It's something that we've done, you recycle as much as you can and compost and do all that stuff. So it's all good for the environment, for sure. But you've always got people that are never going to adapt to it and that's the way it goes.

I'd like to touch again on the cyberattack and on the election; it's all tied together. You know, we look at the cyberattack and our own security and our own personal information being out there, all right? I'm trying to tie it in to the election that we had. Like, right now, we're here talking

about the election and you're trying to vote online and not having the people to go out and go do it, but be able to vote online. They said no, it can't happen, personal information. Well, do you know what? We had personal information when we were in the hospitals and they could do it.

But I can't see how we can't make a voting system that you can vote online. We can do – what?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, we can't afford right now the cost of living but we still have to do it. We have to get to it. So the same as electric vehicles, we've got to get to it. We can't afford to.

Do you know what? We had a cyberattack in the hospitals and our personal information – mine wasn't, but there's personal information that was gone. It's the same thing. We've got to get to it. The same as we're getting to – I'll touch on motor vehicle with the licence plates, another issue. We have people that – and I've touched on this before, plate to vehicle should happen here. It's a big investment to change that system, according to the minister, and we've had that discussion the last couple of years. But it's something that should happen. You have to make that investment.

Again, you invested \$600,000 for NASCAR, which is a great idea and it's going to be a spinoff of whatever, it's a great idea. I think he said a spinoff of \$5.4 million, which great investment during Come Home Year. Not everybody is into NASCAR and you're going to get people that are going to be critical of it, so be it. There are never going to be 100 per cent of ideas that people are going to accept, but it is what it is.

We have to get to a plate to a vehicle and make that happen. That's something that should happen in this province, because we have people that will go in and buy a car, not in dealerships, but privately and never take the registration off and go and get fines. They have \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 worth of fines and they go out and start all over again with another car, when they get caught. That's how it works because

you don't take your plate off the car; the plate goes with the car. If you had it the other way, then so be it.

Touching on the cost of living, I had a letter from a constituent today. This is where it's in regard to – I'm sure that all you people here and all MHAs are getting letters from constituents. She said: I know you're not a Member of the Liberal government, but as an MHA I would like to address rising fuel prices. Seniors in their own homes heated by furnaces soon won't be able to afford to keep their homes. The cost to fill our tank now is \$2,000 to fill an oil tank. Less than two years ago, it was \$800 to \$900. And they were accepting \$800 or \$900, which still wasn't cheap. How can a couple just receiving CPP and OAS afford this? We still have our power bill, our cable bill, our house insurance, our car insurance, our car payment, groceries, gas for our car, municipal taxes, et cetera, to pay.

I think we're out of touch. We've said that before. I listened to the Member from Bell Island speak and being very cordial about you have certain budgets that you have to do, but if we wanted to raise revenue, you rise the gas taxes five cents; you'd see it in the budget, gas tax go up five cents, beer goes up \$1. Well, why can't you drop gas by 10 cents or 20 cents? Why can't you do that?

It's something that should be looked at. If you wanted to raise your revenue, yes, you go out and say we're going to raise beer \$1, or cigarettes \$1, no questions asked and don't matter who's smoking them, they're going up, or who's drinking them, they're going up, but you can't take it off gas. It's just hard for people to understand.

This is the one issue that you're seeing in the public today. Everywhere you go people are talking about fuel prices. It's affecting every single person. You talk about \$141 million and it's a balance in and out, but it's not a balance in their pocket. They're not feeling that – when they came out of the budget, they're not feeling \$141 million in their pocket. They're not feeling \$1 in their pocket. It's coming out; it's not going in.

She says: It's hard enough on all the residents of the province to deal with the rising costs, but

with the income our seniors are having in each month is more difficult. It's time for the government to act now and look out for our seniors.

Is that the first time somebody mentioned that in the last week? You sit over there and – and this is a budget debate – haven't been much debate on the other side about this budget, you must be happy with it totally. You must be totally happy with it.

Not one person has got up and spoke. Not one. I know you're not going to get up and criticize your budget, but you can get up and talk about your district. It's just unbelievable that we've got a budget debate and not one person has gotten up on the other side and spoke about it.

This is last year, during the election: OAS, \$615; CPP, \$634; that equals \$1,249. Heat, \$300; drugs, \$400; shelter, \$600; gas, \$100; \$50 for cell; and \$100 miscellaneous; leaves him with \$59 for the month. And that was last year, before the price of fuel went up. That is the normal, common people that voted us in and we cannot get here and figure this out. Somehow we have to help these people get some relief. They're looking for some relief. They're not looking to get a pile of money. They're looking for some relief at the pumps.

We cannot seem to get there; heads down, not acknowledging it. The only time they acknowledge it is when we say something that you don't agree with and really get out of your minds and start to argue back and we'll talk back and forth. But we've got to start doing something about this. Somehow, we have to start doing something about this.

We're after giving out enough examples that I don't have to go back and touch on them.

Sugar tax: Who knows what that's going to be in September? The problem is right now the people don't even know there's a sugar tax coming. They know that we voted on it last year. They don't know it's coming. It's going to come in September and guaranteed that's when it's going to hit the fan. That's when they're going to realize it's the same as they're saying, well, you're not out on the cost of living, you're not

out on the price of fuel. We've been out on that for months.

It's not like when the budget came down we came out on it; we've been out at that for months. The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port has been out on that a number of times. When somebody says to me, you know, you're not out on it; we've been out on it a lot. We just don't seem to be touching or hitting the right spots to be able to change or just help the people out. That's what we're looking for. That is what – all the stuff in the budget, there's not much other stuff that we didn't agree with. Again, the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island touched on it and he agreed: revenues, expenses and all that.

We haven't beat up the budget but we have beat up on the cost of living and health care, the two things that we have touched on, and we haven't had any acknowledgement that we are going to try to fix that problem.

What is it that we don't get, on the other side, to help the people of the province? What is it that we don't understand? Listen, you are getting the calls. You cannot tell me you're not getting the calls. You are absolutely getting the calls. Sometimes you sit over there and you nod and agree, and I know you got to agree. But somehow we have to help these people. They are not looking for anything else right now other than a break on the prices of gas.

I filled up my vehicle the other day and it was \$120. Last year, let's say it was \$1 a litre – a little over a \$1 – it has doubled in price. We didn't get any increases and nor did anybody else, most times, get any increases. So you have got \$60 extra just on one fill-up.

We are here talking about the registration of a vehicle – I am running out of time now. Registration of vehicle is cut in half, \$80 – well, guess what? That is one fill-up. The gas is up now for the last two months. So we have to be able to help the people of the province, just to get the price of fuel somehow – do something with the price of fuel. Let's figure something out or go do something to figure that out.

I am out of time now.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you very much, I say to the Member.

Next speaker, the hon. the Member for District of Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is great to have another opportunity to speak. I guess this will be my last opportunity now on the budget. Of course, we do have, I think, a loan act and maybe another money bill that we have to look forward to and I certainly look forward to many more opportunities when that happens.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the budget. Look, we all realize where we are, I think, financially as a province. I don't envy the government. If you look at our year-over-year deficits, if you look at our provincial debt – I had a briefing this morning with officials in Finance. I believe \$17.2 billion is our net debt. I think that is the number. That is not including, of course, all of the unfunded liabilities, pensions and so on, which bring that number way, way higher of course. But \$17.2 billion would it be.

I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador realize that is not sustainable. I think we all in this House of Assembly realize that is not sustainable. We understand, I think, that some things are going to have to change and we are going to have to find better ways of doing things. We are going to have to find more efficient ways of doing things. We are going to have to find ways of saving some money and tackling that debt.

There are a number of ways we can do it. Making cuts and finding efficiencies is certainly one way of doing it, but increasing revenues is another. I have to say, the spirit and intent of this subamendment talks about our relationship with Ottawa. I listened to the Leader of the Official

Opposition and I agree with him 100 per cent, as it relates to that. I agree with him pretty much 100 per cent on everything he said. I thought he did an absolutely fabulous job, to be honest with you. I really do. He hit the nail on the head on pretty much everything – very professional. He offered solutions. He offered his perspective. It's not just about complaining; it's about here's what we would do and so on.

I think it's a refreshing approach, an approach we haven't seen necessarily over the last few years over here, but with him at the helm I have to say that it is very refreshing. I think he's doing a great job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Now, Speaker, he talks about our relationship with Ottawa. That is a challenging one. I do agree, I think it's fine to say, if you're on the government side, we're going to leverage our relationship and our good relations with our friends in Ottawa, our cousins in Ottawa, whatever the case might be, and I understand that approach.

I also understand the approach if we go too far the other way, we saw what happened when we started taking down flags and referring to the prime minister by his first name and so on. It felt good at the time. I was there at the time and I was cheering it on, I admit. I was proud, on that bandwagon cheering it on. Way to go, shag you, Steve. I was there. But we did pay a price. We did pay a price, no doubt about it in my mind. In the end, we did.

So it is a tricky balance of how hard is too hard. How much sugar or honey do you use as opposed to using the big stick? Personally, I think that trying to use a diplomatic approach, certainly on the onset, is where we should be. But if we don't get the action that we require, that's when I think it's important that we – not necessarily take it too far. We don't have to be rude and disruptive. We don't need to start tearing down Canadian flags, but I think we have to be more assertive and more firm in our approach. I think there has to be a more united approach.

The fact that the Leader of the Official Opposition would say – I would join with him

and I'm sure the NDP and the other independents will all agree that we would certainly be on board in a united front. I don't care who goes to Ottawa; it doesn't matter to me, but I would sign on to that concept. Whether I'm part of it, I'm there or not, I would certainly sign on to that concept that we really need to, as a group, come together and try to leverage more funds from Ottawa; what I would certainly consider our fair share, which we're not getting. I will agree with the Official Opposition.

Members over there may not want to say it, I get that. You've got to be careful what you say, and who you might peeve off. I understand that. But I think deep down inside you know what we're saying over here is right. I really believe you know that to be true. And it's a challenge. Because we have seven seats. It is what it is; it's politics. Our system under this federation, while it's a great country and it works in many ways, the reality of it is that small provinces do not necessarily fare well in this particular set-up.

Because we have seven seats. And those seven Members, whoever they are, regardless of political stripe, it does not matter. There are seven, and they are sitting across the table from 100, or 100 and some-odd from Ontario, and another 70, 80 from Quebec, or whatever the number is, against seven. So it doesn't matter. Stripe doesn't matter. This is not about Liberal versus PC versus NDP. This is about seven seats in Newfoundland up against central Canada. That's the challenge we face.

And it's not an easy challenge; that's why we haven't seen any significant movement on Marine Atlantic; that's why. The Minister of Immigration made his political bones, I would say, Mr. Speaker, on the *Open Line* every other week talking about Marine Atlantic. I agreed with what he was saying. But he did. It was the challenge of the number of seats that we have compared to the number of seats on the Mainland. Quebec has a lot of seats, so they have that political piece going for them. And of course they always love to play the separation card, and Canada folds every single time – every single time.

I would suggest we probably would have gotten a much better deal on the Upper Churchill, even, back in Smallwood's day, only for the fact if the

federal government at the time had the guts to say we're putting a national corridor through here and you can't block it. I don't care if you like it or not. That's what they should have done, if they were looking after the best interests of the country, but they kowtowed to Quebec. The tail wagged the dog, and the tail continues to wag the dog. That's the reality of what we're up against.

There are no easy answers, but I do agree that we are not receiving – in as far as I'm concerned – our fair share. When we look at the fact that Quebec have all these surpluses and they're getting all this money from the Upper Churchill and so on, and their own rivers, and their revenues are just flowing in. They have the best kind of programs, topnotch, and they're just flush with cash and then they're still getting transfers from Ottawa. Here we are struggling. We have people struggling to survive. We have a huge shortage of family doctors. We have problems in long-term care. We have problems in tertiary care. We have problems in home care. We have problems with ambulance services, transportation, roads and infrastructure, ferry services, you name it. We've got huge issues in this province because of the size, the geography and, of course, how the communities are laid out all throughout that geography.

It is unique. You cannot compare that to a city like Toronto where you have millions of people all together in high-rise buildings and so on, and you have that density where, when the money flows in there, they're able to do so much more. That's not the reality that we have. I would suggest we're more like a territory, arguably, than we are a province. As a matter of fact, it's interesting. When we receive funds from Ottawa, some of these programs that come out for infrastructure and so on, we fall under the rural category actually. Money that's coming to St. John's, Mount Pearl and CBS, we're considered rural under the federal programs.

So arguably, we should be treated more like a territory, recognizing our issues and our geography, but we're not. We need to fight for that – we need to fight for that. I'm not saying that ministers and people over there are not talking to the prime minister when they get a chance, or raising it with the federal Finance minister, or raising it with the minister of

Health, federally. I'm not saying that you're not doing that. But obviously, nothing has changed.

Again, I'm not saying we go back to tearing down Canadian flags, but I do think this is such an important issue for our province, for our fiscal sustainability as a province, for the people who we represent, that this is an issue where all parties and non-parties should come together in a united front to look at ways that we can be lobbying the federal government together. And who is on that team, who's the one who is actually having the meetings, doesn't matter to me, I don't care. But represented with the blessing of all of us, and the people, to look for more because we need more. We need help. We really do.

We're talking about trying to reach a balanced budget by 2025, I think. Before that it was 2021 and now it's 2025, any little glitch that happens, that could be thrown off to 2027 and 2030 and so on. That's just to balance the budget. That's not doing anything to deal with the debt. That debt is there; we're still going to paying a billion dollars a year, whatever it is we pay on debt servicing. We pay more on debt servicing than we do on education. So that doesn't even touch that.

This is growing. From now until 2025, we're going to just add to that bill. So we do need some help, and there's no silver bullet that's going to come from the oil industry – that God for Bay du Nord, that it did get approved. Disgusted by the fact of how that went, that we had to be waiting on pins and needles. You talk about our relationship with Ottawa, that was another one, but thank God it did go through. It's going to be helpful, but it's not going to save us. It's not going to deal with that huge debt that we have, and it's not going to necessarily deal with all our health issues and education issues and everything else, but I think it is a step in the right direction.

But we do need to do things. We do need to work together with Ottawa to try to bring in some more revenue into the province. I think that has to be part, at least, of the solution. Also, we obviously have to try to grow our industries and we've heard it talked about here in the House of Assembly, time and time again, the opportunity as it relates to IT, as an example,

opportunities to grow tourism and great opportunities to grow our fishery. Some nice to hear the Member for Bonavista and the Member for Ferryland raised as well and talked about our fishery.

I think it's the first time I've heard fishery – no, I've heard the Member for Bonavista raise fishery before, but other than that I haven't heard the word fish in this House. The former Member of Cape St. Francis, he used to bring it up, but very, very little mention of the fishery, and that's what brought our people here. The fishery is a billion-dollar industry, but maybe it could be a \$2 billion, maybe it could be \$3 billion. What's happening with the seals is ridiculous. That's another one that goes back to our relationship with Ottawa. That's another one.

It's absolutely ridiculous what's happening, and the fishery impacts us all. It's not just rural Newfoundland; it's the lifeblood of many communities in rural Newfoundland. I've said in this House before, go through Donovans Business Park and start looking at the businesses there and ask yourself which ones have connections to the fishery, in terms of supplies, service and everything else. There's an awful lot.

If the fishery shut down in full tomorrow, there'd be a bunch of empty buildings over in Donovans, and there would be a number of businesses that a good part of their business would be chopped off. If they could survive and find something else, who knows. But it would. So there are opportunities there, but again it comes down to our relationship with the federal government, and we need to come together to address – I think it's a huge issue for us.

Speaker, I've got about five minutes or so; I want to just branch off into a different subject now. I want to talk about, for a moment, the whole concept of openness and transparency. I was part of the PC government at the time, when infamous Bill 29 was brought in to this House. I can remember there was a filibuster. I can remember Members on the opposite side – I think there was the Minister of Energy and the Member for Bay of Islands that were with the Liberals at the time. Nobody else is left there now.

But I can remember them on the other side, with all the pieces of paper, everything blacked out, telling us day after day what a disaster Bill 29 was. I remember the filibuster, and I can remember when that filibuster was over and the vote happened, and after listening to the debate and everything, I remember looking over to my colleague to my right, I believe – I think it was the former Member for Terra Nova. It might have been the Member for Mount Pearl North. It was one of them. I think it was the former Member for Terra Nova. I remember saying, b'y, this was a long haul, and I think we're on the wrong side of this one.

We all had to vote for it, of course, or possibly be tossed, or whatever. It was a whip vote and so on, but we voted for it. I voted for it and I remember saying, I think this is a mistake. We're on the wrong side of history, mark my words. And sure enough, time went on, and we saw all the people being denied information because of Bill 29. I would argue it was being misused and abused. We started hearing from constituents, over and over again. It became a huge issue.

I remember it became a huge issue in our caucus. I can remember bringing it to every caucus meeting, and other Members were too, saying, pleading with the Cabinet, we've got to reverse this; we've got to do something to Bill 29. But they wouldn't heed our warning. They wouldn't listen. In the end, that was the main issue that landed me with the other party at the time. No doubt, it was the beginning of the end for that administration.

Now, in fairness, the new interim Leader came in – the former Member for Topsail - Paradise – and he got Clyde Wells and they started a committee. They came up with new ATIPP legislation, which was touted as being the best in the country. We had the best in the country. That was not that long ago.

Unfortunately, history starts to repeat itself and that's where I want to go with this. You would think that we all would have learned from that experience of not being open and transparent, hiding information from the media, from the public and so on. And that administration paid the price at the polls, primarily over that issue.

Now, we are hearing from the Citizens' Representative today and he is talking about the fact that the government is hiding information from the public, from the media and utilizing the client-solicitor privilege to do it – not wanting to release information. It was this government that jumped on some court ruling out West, out in BC somewhere and took the, I'll say, privacy commissioner to court, or his office, and they fought in court to fight against our Privacy Commissioner to allow them now to start hiding information under the auspices of client-solicitor privilege. Not a good move, I would say. Not a good move.

We have also heard, now, as it relates to the Rothschild report talking about Cabinet documentation under the excuse of: it's a Cabinet document, we can't release anything. I believe the Privacy Commissioner recently came out and talked about he had done a review of all the times that the government had used that excuse, that it was a Cabinet document. And when he reviewed them, I can't remember the percentage but a high percentage, I think it was like over 60 per cent of them, if I am not wrong, the Privacy Commissioner determined it was an inappropriate use of that excuse, but they did it anyway.

Of course, NL Hydro and OilCo, formerly under Nalcor, were hiding information under the *Energy Corporation Act*. We debated that legislation when we brought in OilCo. At that time, I asked, let's change this so that OilCo and Hydro can't go hiding information from the public like Nalcor has done under the *Energy Corporation Act*, and this government refused to do it.

That's three solid examples of where we're going backwards, not forwards and I would say it's very concerning. I would say to the government, look at what happened in the past. It was the downfall of that administration; it could be yours as well. I suggest you start working on being more open and transparent.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

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.

My colleague behind me here from Mount Pearl - Southlands said that we don't get our fair share, and we don't. We have to go to Ottawa and ask for that. It's kind of funny because sometimes us Members from Labrador feel that similar way if we have to go St. John's and ask for a little extra, to explain ourselves as we are a very rural and remote area. We are a territory, basically, within the province, within the provincial union. So I understand exactly where he's coming from, but from a different point of view as a Labradorian and as a person who represents a very, remote, rural area, along with my colleague from Torngat Mountains and my colleague from Lake Melville and, to the extent, my colleague from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, as well.

When you want to talk about a territory, you can talk about Labrador. It's only 30,000 of us. We're spread out over a geographical area larger than the Maritimes. We have that one road. We understand. It's interesting to see the juxtaposition of how we feel as Labradorians sometimes, as the province as a whole feels with Ottawa.

So when my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands says get our fair share from Ottawa, I do agree on both accounts. Labradorians, we do need a little extra. We do live in a very unique, challenging environment that do require a little extra, but at the same time I do understand the province's need. We need to go talk to Ottawa as well, because by talking to Ottawa maybe we can get something for Labrador as well.

You just look at the health transfers. What we get from Ottawa – and it's interesting in the federal health act that it talks about trying to, with the health transfers, make sure that we can deliver an equal service across the country, but we don't have an equal service across this country.

I live right on the border. From my house, I look into Quebec. I feel like Sarah Palin, I can see Russia, but I actually can see Quebec from my backyard. If someone gets sick in Vermont and they need to get to a doctor's appointment, a cancer appointment, anything like that, they go to their doctor, or the clinic. They don't even have to go to their actual doctor; go to the clinic, get a pass for the next outgoing flight and they will either go to Sept-Îles, Quebec, or Montreal, according to where their specialist is to. No questions asked. They go pick up a slip, get on a plane and they go get the medical service.

If I take sick in Labrador West and I have to go to a specialist appointment, well, I break out my credit card for a \$2,000 round trip to St. John's to go see my specialist and then fight with them to get my money back. That is not fair and equal access to health care. We are supposed to have a similar service across this nation. That's how the federal health transfers are supposedly supposed to work.

Clearly, the health transfers we're getting from the federal government don't take into account the very rural and remote regions that we have as this province. So I agree with my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands and my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, that, yes, let's go to Ottawa and ask for more money for health transfers and try to justify that we don't live in a province with the type of infrastructure that Quebec, Alberta, even the Maritimes has. They don't have the similar challenges. We have the challenges of a territory, but we have the population of a province. So we're stuck in this weird paradox of we're a territory but we're a province, but we're a province in name but a territory in geography with a splash of urban.

So we're the interesting one of all the provinces.

AN HON. MEMBER: Unique.

J. BROWN: Unique is a good term. Thank you my hon. colleague. We are unique.

At the same time, we have to make Ottawa realize that not all provinces are made equally. Not all provinces have the same issues. We are all very unique, we all have our challenges and some more challenging than others.

Yes, we understand that other provinces do have some unique challenges, but they seem to be striving a lot better with them than we are with ours. I know we went to Ottawa and asked for rate mitigation help and stuff like that, but that's just a drop in the bucket of the actual issues that this province faces.

Yes, we have to keep electrical rates down because electricity is a necessity. It is a necessity of modern society – understandable. But health care is challenged now. As we go into the future of health care, we are going to find more challenges and more complexities as we come out of this pandemic. We may be out of the pandemic and back to a semi-normal society but that pandemic is going to haunt us for a generation afterwards, so we are going to find some unique challenges in our health care afterwards.

Clearly, we watched health care workers get stretched so thin now that many of them have left the profession altogether. How do we replace these people? But also, at the same time, how do we encourage a new generation of health care workers to come into the system, as they just witnessed what happened to the health care system during the pandemic? Did we frighten a complete generation of potential health care workers? How do we mitigate that challenge on how we encourage and ask the youth of this province to become a health care worker?

So these are things that we are facing. Yes, I am with you. I will go to Ottawa and ask for help to increase health care transfers because we are going to need it. We clearly need it. What we are seeing from Ottawa now in that is just not going to cut it. So yes, that is one thing that we need to go and talk about, and I am more than happy to go and talk about that because I see it in my community. I went from eight doctors to three. I have less services now than I had when I was growing up in Labrador West.

I know that my colleagues from across Labrador have the same thing. We are facing some unique challenges when it comes to delivering health care. At the end of the day, how do we go past this? But, at the same time, we have to go back

to Ottawa and say, you have to take into consideration some of these things. So yes, 100 per cent, I agree with that.

And this is going to cost a lot of money that even if we did get our financial house in order, it is still going to be a significant cost. Health care, obviously, isn't free. It is a very expensive service, but we have to make sure that everyone has equal and ample opportunity to get the health care they need. I know that we can do it and we should be having this dialogue with our federal counterparts.

We also have a lot of other unique challenges too in the sense that how do we move forward in encouraging the next generation to take up the mantle of health care worker, to take up the mantle of engineer, technology and so on and so forth. And we need to go, actually, look at our own school system and how we provide education, because that is a changing world as well. Even after the pandemic, we had those issues there. But we have to encourage our own, to train our own, to take up as a physician or a nurse practitioner, or work in IT or work in the future of any industry in this province, or develop a completely new industry. It is possible, and this is where we need to (inaudible).

So it's another thing that we need to go and see, where do we find this? Do we talk to Ottawa about it, about training our own and stuff like that? Because we have to stem our population decline. We have to find ways of immigration, but also, at the same time, keeping the population we have and encouraging the population of the future to stay. Because as we continue to lose population, it's a smaller tax base. It's a smaller –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's just getting a little difficult to hear the identified MHA.

Thank you.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We need to stem the tide of our low population. We have to encourage our population to stay. We have to encourage our population to do what they pursue, what they want to do in life as a professional or whatnot, but we need more people to take care of the previous generation.

Right now, as a good example, I can't get any home care workers in Labrador West. The wages are just not there and the work-life balance is just not there, but we need to find ways to make those a more appealing and more wanted career path. At the same time, we have to make sure that we train them and encourage them that they can do this as a valid career, that won't burn them out, and won't put them in a financial situation where they can't afford to even live.

So we have to take step back and look at the big picture, and then the sides of the picture and around the picture, because it's just not that clear. At the same time, the answer is probably pretty close at hand, and that's where we need to have a good look at all that.

I know my fellow colleagues just said it – the cost of living in this province. It's no different my way. I get calls and I get people saying it's getting tough that the cost around them have gone up, but the income into their home has not gone up. We need to have a step back and say, what is priority? What needs to be looked at first? How do we pursue it in a way that we can make immediate action and make immediate corrections?

Seniors not being able to heat their homes – that's a concern that should be top-of-mind priority. It is very important that it should be addressed immediately. Also, with that, there are other bills – your hydro bill. I remember that they have already mentioned to me, it's a public service; why do we pay taxes on hydro? It's a public service.

So these are things that we can take back and look and say, hey, should we be charging tax at this time on hydro? Should we be doing this at this time? Stuff that actually hits directly at home. When someone is looking at their bill and they notice that if there is a bit of trimming that the government can help to make that bill smaller, it is probably the best solution there.

Not just a one-time thing but at least for the next year, how did the bill that shows up at their house, how do we make that smaller? How do we actually put that back into households and families?

And not just for certain income people, but for everyone in this province right now because everyone is hurting and some may not actually say it. Some have their pride and may not say that they are hurting, but I think a lot more people than normal are hurting. I think there are a lot of people in this province that are going to have a hard time with this.

We need to have a look at where do we actually help people directly and the most effective way and reach the greatest, broadest of this province. Because those are the ones who really need it right now. I know it is not as simple as it is to say it, but we have to make sure that – are we looking in the right places? Are we helping people in the right spots of society and are we doing that?

What is going to happen now is we are going to see a lot more people not being able to afford rent, so we are going to see more evictions. We are going to see more people not being able to find shelter. It does spiral very quickly. For a lot of studies and stuff, even leading up to the pandemic, talking about how for every one dollar a Canadian makes they owe \$1.15 or \$1.25. So a few extra bills or a few extra dollars tacked on to their gasoline or their grocery bill or anything like that for a person who is living paycheque to paycheque is going to spiral very quickly.

So a culmination of pandemic and, in my opinion, greed on Wall Street and a few other things now have created a situation for residents of this province that were just not seen before. There are some signs there that this is not going to be a one-time, small thing. This is going to be an issue for quite some time as we come out of the pandemic but also as we see a lot of the wealth of Canada held by a very small amount of people. It's going to have devastating effects, especially on a province like ours.

Whenever the cost of living in this province is significant as it is, we're going to see a lot more people hurting. So we need to take a step back, look at everything that's actually going on around here, what actually is hurting, what people are actually hurting around here and say do you know what? Where do we put the time, energy and resources into places where people actually get the maximum amount of benefit?

You look at the taxes on hydro, the taxes on home heating fuel, things like that, as ways that, in the short term, people actually have immediate relief from the cost of what is spiraling out of control.

It's disappointing to see the large multinational corporations just hoarding so much wealth at this time, needlessly to be honest; it's unreal. Just to watch the trading prices on the commodities market and just watching, going wow. These companies are making massive, massive, massive profits off the backs of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. It is unreal to watch this time.

So we need to find ways to step in and push that below for our most vulnerable people. At this time, the most vulnerable people in this population, that population of people has grown significantly. We have a large amount of people here that need immediate relief. They need immediate attention, but, at the time, all of us together to step up and do what's best and protect them because we just can't let so many people in this province fall behind. It's just not what we need right now.

If anything, we need to encourage and lift up as many people as possible and move forward, because we have a province to rebuild after a pandemic. We have a province that we need to move forward because we need to get on the right path when it comes to the future.

We're well positioned; we have the resources, the knowledge, the know-how and the people. We are a place that actually most other nations in this world would envy and that's just the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They would envy what we have here and our ability.

We have a small population but – I think one study, and I don't know how long ago it was – I

remember saying that some of the most educated people per capita is Newfoundland and Labrador. At one time, we had the largest per capita of so many different types of engineers and other academics. What really stemmed that was the ability for us to teach so many people effectively in a short period of time. We just look down the street at Memorial University, that's a massive piece of infrastructure, that's a massive education facility for a province of 500,000 people. So we are very well tuned at this, but we can't lose it. By letting our people down in a time of need is how we lose something like that.

So we have to make sure that we keep the people of this province supported in a way that they still want to go and get an education; they're not trying to look for shelter; they're not preoccupied with the idea of trying to keep their chequebook balanced. But instead they're looking at maybe I want to go to school. Maybe I want to take that chance and start that small business and maybe I want to be that person right now. That's where you have to be to make sure that those dreams of those people are still those dreams of those people and not worrying about am I going to make this payment this month; am I going to make that payment this month.

I know the other day I asked a question of the Minister Responsible for Labour about the new relationship between the confidence and supply between NDP and the Liberals in Ottawa federally. But one of those other things, a good thing that came out of it is pharmacare. That would do this province so wonderfully, to have that program put in place here, now, today. Because we see it, as with another thing that has gone up in cost, is people's medication.

There are so many stories of seniors cutting pills so they get two days out of one pill instead of when they're supposed to be taking one or someone using expired insulin and all those other stories we're hearing. That is a huge cost on a lot of people is medication. Especially people with chronic illnesses who are on a medication for life. That is a lifetime of extra cost, especially if they're not on a drug card or they don't have insurance from their work or employer, that's an extra cost on an individual for the rest of their life. If we could take that

burden off a person like that and apply it so that they can go to school or take that chance on that small business or move forward in any of that stuff. That is one more person who is lifted up and can help another person. For every person you help, there are two other people that will get helped afterwards because when you help a person it carries on. It always does. Helpfulness and kindness is contagious and that is the thing that we need to look at as a province: How do we help that one person?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: If I can have the attention of the House, please. For all of those of you who are fans of Canadian Jeopardy! players: Mattea just won again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: And the question is?

Always a pleasure to get up in this House of Assembly and speak on behalf of the wonderful residents of Topsail - Paradise and all throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Before I start, I think I'll just talk to the ribbon that we've all been wearing. I know some are not wearing them anymore, but I guess we change our suits, we change our outfits and the ribbon gets lost, but I'm sure our thoughts and prayers go out to those in the Ukraine and their families and friends and what they're going through.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: And all those throughout the world who are dealing with hardship. That just makes what we do here tonight even more important, because we live in a fabulous province and we have the opportunity to do what we do.

This is Mental Health Week. It's a huge week when we talk about the numbers of individuals who are dealing with mental health challenges. The slogan for this year is Empathy: Before you

weigh in, tune in. A very good slogan on that. I believe their hashtag is #GetReal.

I know when I first got elected, my brother and I spoke to how we were raised, and empathy was a big part of that. Empathy meaning put yourself in the other person's shoes. That's something we need to do and we need to do especially when we're dealing with mental health issues, or speaking with people with mental health issues.

Like I said: Before you weigh in, tune in. It's good to know a little bit about mental health. I've learned a lot since I've taken on this role as shadow minister for Health and Community Services. You learn that upwards to 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deal with mental health illness. Approximately 40 per cent seek treatment and approximately 20 per cent receive proper treatment.

We also know that out of those 100,000, 70 per cent of mental health illnesses start in childhood or early adolescence. Those are huge numbers. So when you talk about this showing empathy and before you weigh in, tuning in, that's one in five when you look at our population. One in five are dealing with mental health issues. That's probably just the ones who've identified as having mental health issues. So put that in perspective; that's quite a number.

So how do I tie that into the budget and the debate that we're having here this evening? Well, one big issue we've been dealing with is the increase in gas prices. Gas prices affect a number of things. The main one, of course, is they affect transportation. For any of us driving or travelling or transporting anything, you know, to see the price of gas go up like it has, has put a tremendous strain on our everyday lifestyle.

It's also affected the price of food. I gave an example there not too long ago in the House about going into a local grocery store, picking up a small single-serving salad, mainly lettuce, some tomatoes, some bacon bits, and it was \$11-something. So you talk about trying to eat healthy – that's the result of our increasing cost of living, our increasing gas prices.

Heat, that's been mentioned a couple of times in the House, trying to heat your home. Think of your mother or father or grandparents, living on

a single income, filling their oil tank on a monthly basis, something that may have cost them \$600 is now upwards to \$1,000. That's huge. That's huge. Some may not even realize it, but even shelters where you live is affected by this. I've known of individuals who have come to me, young couples who actually moved back into their parent's house in the last month because they couldn't afford to heat their house and they couldn't afford – so they move back into the basement apartment. And that's people who have the opportunity to do that. There's others out there who do not have that opportunity.

My colleague here from Labrador spoke to the medications. We have the highest aging population across Canada. At some point in time, we're all going to be on some kind of medication. But seniors, of course, tend to be on more, and you hear of them splitting up, rationing out their prescriptions. You hear about them using expired prescriptions, skipping a dosage. That's all attributed to the cost of living.

Not too long ago a couple were interviewed, they come back and forth into the Health Sciences to get treatments – I believe it was cancer treatments they were getting. The cost of getting in their car and driving in is becoming a factor in how they schedule those treatments. So cost of living is playing on them.

If you're talking about travel as well, we look at the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, good example, because individuals, who don't have a service within a certain range will have to drive to that, have to get there somehow. They're paid per kilometre. They get a per diem per kilometre. That hasn't changed, yet the price of gas is gone up. So that becomes a cost. That becomes a strain on individuals who have health issues.

We also spoke to rapid tests. We got a good answer from the minister today talking about the groups that get them and talking about small supplies, yet there are vulnerable groups out there who would do much better if they had access to that quick rapid test. Not all of them are capable of going off and getting a free PCR.

We have Come Home Year happening, we're expecting people to come back home. There's

going to be some anxiety when people come from abroad and you're wondering, okay, should they come in to the gathering. If they had access to a quick rapid test that would quell some of their anxieties.

I just roll back to this is Empathy: Before you weigh in, tune in. That applies to those with mental health issues, but it also applies to when you're putting together a budget. When you're putting together a budget, before you weigh in, tune in. I think it was said in the House a couple of times here: Listen to the people you represent. Listen to the people with lived experiences.

There was a tour of the mental health facility today; I think it was a mock-up tour. Wonderful. From what I saw, it looks like it's going to be a top-notch facility. Part of this mock-up tour is to get staff acquainted with it, and they can also suggest where changes can be made, where improvements can be made, where something can be done a little bit more efficient.

But this is a mental health facility. I do hope today was not just a photo opportunity. I do hope that in moving forward with this facility, that those with lived experiences, those who are going to be in that facility as patients are going to be at least asked for this opinion in how they see it set up. That's who it's going to serve.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: Thank you. The Member across is telling me they have been. So that's wonderful to hear. Because that's what should be done. Because we should be looking at the goal, the outcome, who it's going to serve and if it's going to serve them better.

So if I roll this back, Mental Health Week and what mental health we're dealing with, and I've given you the numbers, some of the numbers on that and you'll get other numbers elsewhere, but the fact of the matter is, it's a serious issue here. And I would suspect coming out of COVID those numbers are probably gone up even higher. So when we go back to the budget and we talk about, before you weigh in, tune in, think about individuals with lived experiences; listen to the individuals out there.

We've been getting lots of calls, and I'm sure everyone in this House has been getting the same calls, on the cost of living and what can you do. What can you do to ease the burden? We've had some debate here when you get up and say: There are no new taxes in the budget. And we might argue, well, there's a sugar tax. We might hear, well, that was coming last year, or we might hear talk about the carbon tax and we might get another response there. That's fine.

But if you look up the definition of a tax, it's usually a compulsory levy that's put on residents. But the secondary definition of a tax is a strain or a heavy demand put on individuals. It does not talk to a levy. It does not talk to compulsory contribution. The second definition of a tax is a strain or a heavy demand put on an individual.

So although the budget may not have had new taxes, and what we see and what I spoke to when talking about the gas increase, as an example, there is no doubt in my mind that the budget and the response, or lack of response, is taxing on the people of this province. It's taxing on them. It may not be a tax, but the lack of action in some areas has put an unnecessary strain and heavy demand on a good portion of our population.

Let's roll back to mental health that I started on. Individuals dealing with financial stress are twice as likely to develop poor health. So we have a taxing budget and the gas prices have gone up, and they put financial stress on so many individuals, and it's twice as likely – forget COVID now. Forget the increase from the pandemic on mental health, but you have the financial stress, which is proven to lead to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, mental health issues, heart disease, high blood pressure, loss of sleep, broken relationships and the list goes on.

Here we are in Mental Health Week, debating the budget, and it's all connected. We look at health outcomes. We have the Health Accord looking at proper health outcomes and this budget is contributing to poor health outcomes and unnecessary mental health strain. So that's factual. There's absolutely nothing I said there, in that 15 minutes, that you will find incorrect. There's nothing. It all flows and we all heard the

issues around the increase in tax and how it's affected people.

You want to talk about solutions. How do you do this? We've tossed out some things like the home heating rebate. I even suggested that investment in continuous glucose monitoring will save money down the road. There are different things we can do. Also, we talked about, the Member for Labrador talked about it, our leader spoke to it, about a united front, to try and get our fair share in this Confederation that we're in.

The Labour Market Development Agreement, as an example, provides different pockets of funding across the provinces and territories. It's based on, I think – I stand to be corrected now – 19 different factors or variables, to try and be fair in what they put out. I'm not sure if it looks at employment rates and the like.

Our health care transfers, on the other hand, are done per capita. Again, a united front to get our fair share is what's needed here. But if you look at per capita, every jurisdiction – every province or territory is in a different situation. They have different demographics; they have different geography. In this province we have the oldest population. We have the highest rate of chronic illness, the highest rate of diabetes. I looked at the cancer report recently, Canadian statistics for 2021, and there some instances there where we have the highest rates of certain cancers across the country.

So to accept the per capita formula does not address the real need in this province. I really think we need to look at that. We need to look at getting our fair share from the federal government, and I think we need to do it. We hear collaboration a lot; this is where we really need to collaborate and come together to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are getting their fair share from this.

But, again, we have got to bring it back to those with lived experiences. What are we hearing? What are we hearing here? The Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde will be happy to hear I, too, was out in his district just last week and met with a group down in New Perlican and a great conversation. We had a nice

meeting there at the community hall and I will throw this out to him: One of the phrases we heard was that government is out of touch. Not us, they said it.

When you hear that, that goes back to listening to what people are saying. Before you weigh in, tune in. But the other thing which was touched on tonight as well – I'll quickly get it out in a minute – is one of the individuals I spoke with – actually there were three gentlemen and they went on and on about the seal fishery. They went on, much like the Member for Bonavista talked. They went on and they had all of the facts and they cannot understand why the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador were not doing more about the seals and not just hunting them. They said every part of a seal can be utilized. If it is not for the meat, if it is not for what is left over for dog food, there are some portions that can be sent away. The oils are the best you can have health-wise.

So let's start listening to the people, listening to what they are saying and let's really try and make this less taxing on our residents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to talk a little bit about my district. It is the second time around. Anyway, earlier, I was a little bit emotional because it is really hard when we are dealing with day-to-day life and I see the lives impacted in my district. It is different when you talk about, oh, I have the poorest district in the province. We don't have as much infrastructure and services as other districts.

It is one thing to talk about that but when you are out there in the district and, over the years, you have that acquired history of knowledge and you see so many generations impacted and you see children born and, unfortunately, sometimes, they are not born into a good future. So, for me,

that is important, but I did talk about the resilience of our people and I wanted to speak a little about some of our strong leaders.

Last week, I did a Member's statement on Boas Jarause. We're only given 200 words, so to sum up a man who had so much life experience, so much knowledge and was such a strong leader, it's really hard to sum that up in 200 words, Speaker.

So one of the things I wanted to mention was his love of the land. I talked a lot about his leadership in Nunatsiavut. He served his people well, but he was also a very knowledgeable Innu hunter. He was resettled from Hebron. One thing my mom always talked about because she and Boas Jarause were chapel servants, she would refer to him as Brother Boas, which is probably some of the reasons why we called him uncle, Uncle Boas. But when he was resettled from Hebron down to Makkovik, every year he would go back. He would go back to his homeland and he would actually travel by dog team. Every year he'd go back hunting, go back fishing.

Then after, as time went on, he would travel by Ski-Doo and he did this into his old age, even when he was sick. He was a really strong person. I think his strength came from what he witnessed as a young man, when they were forcibly resettled to the southern part of Northern Labrador.

I remember a story of my Uncle Tony told me about when he was out with Boas and Boas's son, Clements. He would go out and he would be sort of really impressed with Boas Jarause's knowledge of the land. He would know exactly where to put a net, or he would know where the birds were going to be. His knowledge – and it didn't matter if it was actually around the Makkovik area, his new home, or whether it was up north in the Hebron area. That's so important.

Also, he had such a love for the culture and the language and he was a strong advocate for keeping the language for the Labrador Inuit. Every time he would go to meetings, he would speak of that. I have to say, over the years, growing up as a young girl, and then later going to university and coming home and seeing him, I was always so pleased to see him. I was so

always so impressed by him. In actual fact, he was one of my heroes, I think, because of his resilience. I think it's important to talk about that. You can't put that in 200 words so it is important to be able to say that.

Another leader, John Jararuse, was resettled from Hebron as well. He went through all that adversity. I'm going to give a Member's statement tomorrow on him but I don't have enough room to talk about some of the things and his respect and love of his church. He was an organ player.

One of the biggest things that really impressed me was his knowledge and the way he shared it with people. He knew the history of Hebron. He knew the history of the resettlement. He was such an educator, not only for people in Nain but for people from all over the world about his experiences and about the actual, true, Inuit history. He was never awarded a grand honorary degree. He never had a lot of recognition, but John Jararuse was a true leader in many ways for the people.

When I went to his funeral last week, one of the things that really struck me was the overall love that I could feel in that church for John Jararuse, from his family and especially his grandchildren and his great-grandchildren. I think a measure of a person, sometimes, is when you can actually share things with your family and receive so much love and admiration from them. I have to say, the respect in that church was overwhelming.

Just a couple of things, too, I am also speaking on the budget. I do bring up housing issues in my district. One of the biggest problems we have is actually plots of land now. To get a plot of land developed costs \$250,000. If you went back through *Hansard* you'd probably see me mention that probably six or seven or eight or nine times. A plot of land \$250,000, without even starting to build a house.

Over the last year, I have been bringing up vacant Newfoundland and Labrador houses, only because they need repair. I think I thanked the Minister of CSSD, who is responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. I have seen the work that you have done over the last year. I have been critical of the shipping

schedule, I have been critical of the delays, but at the end of the day, I do acknowledge the work that your department has done. I have to say it is so good to see a minister who is involved in actually getting action taken. I need to recognize that.

The one thing that I would like, you know, looking forward for budgeting, is for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to come up with a plan where, when a house – and this doesn't have to just be for the North Coast because it is a chronic problem elsewhere as well – becomes vacant, that it's turned around; repairs done and the house is put back in service for another needy family. On the North Coast, there's no consistency there.

When you look at it, you rely on the shipping season. So, really, there should be materials stored and services available so that if a house becomes empty during the winter, it doesn't sit empty. Because what happens is with the elements, with mould, break-ins, those sort of things, small repairs become big and then we get the houses sitting year after year, and on the North Coast we do have a serious housing shortage.

Now, one of the things that has always bothered me, as the MHA, is the perception within the province that we are always wanting things. We always have our hand out. But when you look at the number of Newfoundland and Labrador houses in my district, I think there are only 64, 68, around that number, for my entire district. That's not a lot of houses. I'm not asking for more, I'm just asking for services to be put in place so that when a house becomes empty, vacant, where a family is actually relocated, then that house could be put back into service. I don't think that's a lot to ask for.

Another thing I'd like to say is that one of the reasons that sometimes it's quite difficult day after day to talk about the issues in my district is because I know that people – there's not a lot of interest in helping my district. I'm just one district; we're up in Northern Labrador, kind of out of sight, out of mind. But when you look at the problems we experience, the cost of our electricity.

Before Muskrat Falls, we were looking at, in my district, over 1,000 kilowatt hours, we were paying 18.5 cents a kilowatt hour. The highest anywhere else in the province was 12.2 cents a kilowatt hour. Really, when you look at that, there's such a gap between what we were paying for electricity and what the rest of the province was paying for it. Yet, there's the perception that we want everything for free, that we want things to be given to us.

For us, it's really hard. We can't heat our houses at 19 cents a kilowatt-hour up in Northern Labrador, when the rest of the province is paying 12.2 cents a kilowatt-hour. We went to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, went to the province, and here in the House we were told that that little subsidy is costing millions of dollars, but it's not broken down to show the North Coast access to that little subsidy. I can say not very many people on the North Coast uses electric heat, and very, very few houses are taking advantage of that full small subsidy. So the millions of dollars are from other areas outside of my district. I think that needs to be pointed out as well.

Just looking at the price of fuel now on the Avalon, I think it's \$2.04 a litre. We're frozen over the winter. Probably the first time the price freeze have worked for our benefit, but if the price freeze comes off right now we'd probably be paying \$2.30 a litre. We always end up paying about 30 cents more than Lake Melville; 32 to 35 cents more than on the Avalon.

The thing that's really strange is that we're not on an island. The communities in my district are not on islands. We are not isolated because we're on islands; we're land based. Every region has been connected to the Trans-Canada, the Trans-Labrador Highway, but my region.

I mean, it creates so many problems. It's really, really difficult. One of the issues we deal is chronic problems with our Internet. If we had a road connecting us, they would actually be able to roll the fibre optic cable in on the back of trucks. They wouldn't be looking at hundreds of millions of dollars.

But let's just look at the services now for our Internet. Over the last two years, we've had COVID. Everything went online. If you're in

one of my communities, you can't do very much online. You can't even upload two pictures at a time because the speed is 0.2, not one – on average it's between 0.2 to 1.9 megabits per second. So that's slow Internet, but when you look at the bill you pay for your Internet – home, we have a phone, the regular landline, just a basic phone line and the Internet, and our bill for the Internet and the regular landline is \$207 a month – no TV, nothing else, no cellphone.

Now, luckily for us Starlink is coming into play. A lot of people are looking at Starlink as an option, but I'd like to point out that we're paying \$207 for an Internet speed that don't average over three megabits per second. So how is that allowed to happen? Where's the fairness in that?

In actual fact, there have been a lot of federal dollars available for Labrador and for rural northern regions for upgrades, but the last 10 years we've had very, very little upgrades. So who is actually availing of that money? Not my district. I actually draw little pictures of pots and I put a dollar sign on it and a little arrow, because that's the federal dollars, the pots of money that's available to us, that's actually sailing away. So who's getting the money? It certainly is not us.

Looking at our airstrips, our airstrips were built in the 1980s, 40 years ago. There have been no upgrades to our airstrips, very little maintenance. Even the little shacks for the passengers and the freight, they're so small. They're like the size of a small living room, probably 20 by 20. That has to house the passengers and all the freight. There's no room for the operator of the heavy equipment that maintains the airstrip to practically even turn around, let alone do some work.

So where else in the province would that be acceptable? We rely on those airstrips. That's the only way in and out during the winter. Don't get me started on the ferry, the boat. Because that boat is weather delayed, quite often, and in actual fact when that marine service is running, we get probably five months out of the service. In actual fact, we don't even get that for passenger travel because when you're getting into September, by the second week of September no one travels on that boat because it is so rough and people are actually afraid.

People are afraid to travel on that boat. So they don't have access to the service that is actually being provided because of the conditions they have to endure.

What about travel? Practically every week, this time of the year, we have patients delayed. I have had patients trying to get home for over six days. In actual fact, I got an email from a resident in Rigolet. There are people delayed in Hopedale and Makkovik, and I didn't realize there were people trying to get home from Rigolet. She messaged me and said she had been stuck now, trying to get home for a week. That was yesterday. She finally got home today. So after seven days of waiting to travel home after a medical appointment, she has finally got home.

I went in on her Facebook to message her and I saw there was a post there from April 30. This is while she was stuck. She says there, on her Facebook: As bad as I want to get home after being gone for over a week, I feel even worse for the kids who are supposed to be here in Goose Bay competing in the badminton regionals this weekend. So the badminton team from Rigolet couldn't travel to compete in the regionals. She goes on to say: There hasn't been a regional or a provincial event since before the pandemic began and our Eagles – that's their team from Rigolet – are the defending regional and provincial champions. So they couldn't attend because of weather, because of transportation.

We are not talking about a big blizzard that would keep cars from driving. This is just, basically, warm, mild conditions where you get the difference between snow and rain and so the planes can't fly. She goes on to say: This spring has been the absolute worse with regard to bad weather and another time the road would have been so beneficial for us.

So it is not only patients that are stuck waiting to get home or patients on the North Coast waiting for their specialist appointments that are cancelled and rescheduled for probably another three months. Access to travel is so important. And what is impacted? Our entire lives are impacted. Our quality of health service is

impacted. Our quality of our student life is impacted.

The emotional and mental health – I had the Member there for Topsail - Paradise talking about mental wellness. It's so difficult to travel and then you're faced – if the weather is good and you can travel, well, then you have to buy a plane ticket. If you're in Nain and you want to visit your grandmother who's in the nursing home in Goose Bay, you've got to cough up about \$1,000 return for one person.

So there are lot of issues that go on, that impact my district. Sometimes I do get a little upset about it because it does fall on deaf ears.

But I just want to give a shout out to Holy Moly, the Nain team in volleyball that just won the provincials for the age group of 18U Males B – Holy Moly. Now, I might get in trouble because, in actual fact, they weren't allowed to travel as students, that's why they're not called the Jens Haven (inaudible) but, anyway, Holy Moly did win so a big shout-out to you guys.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and just have a few words tonight on the debate and put a few things on the record.

First of all, to thank the people of Humber - Bay of Islands for, again, when it started to open up I was invited to a lot of events and being around and seeing more people, listening to more concerns. It's always great to get out. This Saturday night, I attended a firefighters' ball down in Humber Arm South. A great bunch of volunteers, 28, they had so many calls this years and there's about 15 of them with 100 per cent showing up to the scene. So I've just got to recognize that. There was a MHA award given out to a young fella by the name of Keegan Hynes.

Keegan did something special down there with one of his friends; he stuck with him and possibly saved his life. So the MHA award went to young Keegan Hynes, a young little fella, 16 years old that did something extraordinary that a lot of people at that age would just try to run and not be involved, but he stood there. I just want to recognize the great work of the young fella, because we hear so many sad stories sometimes about young fellas going astray, but here's a young fella that stood up, showed a lot of courage and a lot of spunk and a lot of maturity along the way.

Also, I was over in Irishtown-Summerside Saturday and they had volunteer appreciation day, the seniors. So they had a great show of seniors, had a great show of volunteers showing up. The HIS fire department was there and just across the road there was the Summerside 4-H, the longest one in the province. They were doing a first aid training put off by the Irishtown-Summerside firefighters. They're heavily involved in the community with the youth. Congratulations to the 4-H club in the area.

I know all throughout the district there are all kinds of events, a lot of volunteer work. Also, Saturday night, I presented a certificate to the Humber Arm South firefighters on behalf of the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, to recognize the work of the volunteers. They were very appreciative of receiving the award and being recognized. That was special to them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank all the residents of the Humber - Bay of Islands once again. It's always a pleasure to be working with the town councils. It's a pleasure to be working with all the volunteer groups; more so, it's an honour and there's only so many of us in this House ever gets that honour.

I'm going to bring up a few concerns that were raised to me throughout the travels. One of them is the cost of living. It is real. I think we all know it's real. What can be done? That's up to government. There are a lot of great suggestions put forth by the Opposition, by the independents, a lot of great suggestions put forth. But, obviously, when you stand up and say, well, we're putting back the gas – I look at the carbon tax, the carbon tax right now goes right into general revenue, back into general revenue.

When you talk about, well, here's how much money we get from tax and here's how much money we gave back. How about the carbon tax? The carbon tax is there, it goes right into general revenue. This is all extra funds that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador gets. They always say, okay, well, we can't cut the gas tax, can you give an income tax rebate? Can you give a rebate to senior citizens? Can you give a rebate to some people who are on lower income? There are always ways to do it, if there's a will to do it.

I can assure you, I know some Members opposite, they get the calls; they get a lot of calls. They definitely get a lot of calls. There has to be a way, the cost of oil, the cost of gas, the cost of food, the cost of medication, anything that you do now, it's gone up. So this idea that, okay, that's how much we got for the gas tax, that's how much we'll give you. We need more. We need more.

I would venture to say – and I'm not speaking for anybody in this House, but if we gave some rebate right now because of the extraordinary circumstances in the world, not just Newfoundland and Labrador, not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador, in the world, if we gave extra, a rebate to the lower end; the seniors who really need it; the transportation; the truckers and all that. And we said the deficit this year, instead of being \$300 is going to be \$500. Who is going to argue that? When it's extraordinary circumstances, you take extraordinary measures. That is the way governments should work.

We all applauded the federal government when we had the COVID; we all applauded when they were helping out the tourism industry; helping out this industry; helping out with that industry because it is extraordinary.

Here we are in Newfoundland and Labrador right now with extraordinary circumstances and we have a government out bragging how low the deficit is, which is not bad, but there are people suffering. There are people suffering. I know people, personally, right now, who can't put enough oil in their tanks. So what they do is they save it for the night times or evenings and they are out somewhere all day. And I'm not being

dramatic here. That's a fact. That is an actual fact.

Here we are sitting down when there are things that we can do as legislators, things that can be done by government and just not being done. It's just not being done. It's almost like you can't understand it, because I remember the Liberal values was to help the people on the lower end. That was always the Liberal values and then you had the philosophy of the PC Party was okay, let's help, and it is going to filter down. Always the philosophy – if there are Liberals over there – was to help the lower end. Always the philosophy. Now the philosophy is just not there any more. It is not there.

If you go back and look at the history of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador – look at the history of the Liberal Party of Canada – it was always helping the grassroots – the grassroots. Somewhere along the way the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador has lost its way.

When there is a way to help, when there is the means to help, when we got extraordinary circumstances in Newfoundland and Labrador where people are suffering; people are deciding should I have medication; should I have food; should I have heat; should I have oil? We can help and we are not helping.

It is a sad day. If the Members opposite don't hear any of those concerns, come with me for a day or two. Just come over and spend a bit of time. I'm serious; there are people suffering. When people start suffering, the anxiety kicks in. With anxiety, then we have the mental health issues because they become isolated. They can't go out and do the things they wanted to do. Some seniors can't even drive the car.

I'm urging government – I'm probably speaking on deaf ears – I'm used to that – but I can tell you I am standing here as one person who has been elected, who has been around longer than anybody in this House, there are people suffering in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and we can do something about it and we're just not doing it – we're just not doing it.

I just had to bring that up. I urge the government, again, to reconsider. Go back in that Cabinet room, wherever you got to go, go back and say, what can we do – what can we do? Because there has to be something; our people with the mental health issues; people are going without medication; people are going without food; people going without heat in their houses.

Trust me and if everybody over there is living in a glasshouse, come over in the Humber - Bay of Islands and I'll let you speak to some real people

–

(Disturbance.)

E. JOYCE: That's one right there on the phone now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

E. JOYCE: One right there just sent me a note then: What you're saying is 100 per cent correct.

Speaker, the other thing that I am going to bring up too – and, of course, we all know it, but it is almost like it is not happening, is lack of doctors on the West Coast. People say, oh, we have more doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador. I can tell you there are thousands and thousands of people on the West Coast without doctors. I know three myself, just gone, absolutely gone. The wait time now at the emergency goes up seven, eight, nine hours. So no one can tell me that's not real.

There are options. There are three nurse practitioners; I asked the minister to meet with them. He won't do it. The answer that you get, well, we're working with the Nurses' Union. That's great, but meet with the nurse practitioners. My god, they're human beings. They're out there helping people. They're actually out helping people and here is an opportunity to help out on the West Coast, the Corner Brook area, all surrounding Corner Brook, Bay of Islands area.

Here are three people who set up an office trying to get a meeting with the minister. I'm asking for a meeting for the minister to meet with them and we can't get the Minister of Health and Community Services to meet with three or four nurse practitioners in Western Newfoundland

that would help with our health care. There's something fundamentally wrong. Fundamentally, there's something wrong.

If the minister would like to meet with them, I would arrange the meeting tomorrow. They would clear their schedule, Minister, for you tomorrow. For Friday, Saturday, Sunday, they would meet with you.

I ask any Member in this House – here's a good example – any Member, whoever wants to stand up and deny this, if you knew there was a business coming in here going to spend \$5 million or \$10 million and they said we need a meeting this Saturday or Sunday, how many people in this House, if they're in town, would meet with that group? How many? Not one, but the minute we say let's go and let's help and meet with people who are going to help our health care, there's an issue. I just don't understand it. I honestly just don't understand it. I don't know where we went wrong that we can't sit down with individuals to try to help with solutions.

I use the cataracts again; I brought it up today. It's just beyond me why this is not solved. It is just beyond me. I have a lot of reasons, which were proven false. I have other reasons were proven false, but there is no one in this government has yet to say to me, okay, we can do that. Let's go do it. It not going to cost a cent. It is not going to cost any extra money. We're going to help 800 seniors in Western Newfoundland. I mean you think you'd jump for joy. You think you'd go out and have a nice press conference and say look at the seniors we're helping, which you deserve to do.

AN HON. MEMBER: Photo op.

E. JOYCE: Photo op, I don't care what it is. If the people want to have a photo, go ahead, as long as the seniors can see. As long as the seniors gets a quality of life, as long as they can get their licence back, as long as they can read the medication, I don't give a hell who gets the photo, as long as it's done.

This is the kind of thing that I don't know why it's not done. This is the kind of information that you give to a government that should take it, grab it and say oh my God, we can help out here.

Take it and do it, but it's not being done. For some reason, there are two or three options for health care in Western, and it's just not being done.

I'd say to the Minister of Tourism, if somebody was going to set up a big tourism structure out in the Humber - Bay of Islands tomorrow and say we need out there, we have a great tourism structure, you'd be out to meet with them – you would, but health care we won't for some reason. We won't.

We know the lack of doctors. We know that we need some other way. Here are nurse practitioners who can do it, and they can do it much cheaper than having people waiting in outpatients or specialists. They can give people their driver's licence. They can give prescriptions. They can give it to the people that need to go for a blood test. They can do all that. There are options there, and we won't do it as a government.

This is where I can honestly tell you, I miss it. I just don't understand it. I go back to the days with Clyde Wells. I even go back to the days with Brian Tobin. I even go back to the days with Roger Grimes. If you said to Roger Grimes, Brian Tobin, Clyde Wells, Beaton Tulk and any of those guys, we've got an option out there, we're going to get you 600, 700 per nurse practitioner that can see people; we've only got four or five. The b'ys would be on the plane, gone. They'd be gone out to meet with them. They'd sit down with them. They'd bring them in a room and say: What can we do to help out here?

That's what I'm used to as a Liberal Party. If there's an option there – I've seen Clyde Wells sit down with a fisherman, on a regular basis, because it was something he thought they could help out. I've seen Beaton Tulk fly out on a Friday night to meet with someone because there was a great adventure that someone needed done out there, that he needed to be a part of. No PR, no cameras, just go out and get it done.

I'm asking this government will someone go out and look at the options that can help people with their health care. They're there. They're easy. They're simple. But it's just not being done. For some reason, if it's going to be a bit of

controversy, or it may be not within the procedures that we should follow, it's just not being done. And while it's not being done, there are a lot of people being affected by it, and that's the sad part. If it was some of us just worried and some of us up here bantering back and forth, but I'm giving suggestions.

I'm making real people count in this House of Assembly by offering and asking the minister, asking the Premier, asking other people in government to try to get meetings with these people so that they can get the cataracts done, so they can get back their dignity and quality of life in their last number of years, and then nurse practitioners who can definitely help out with our doctor shortage in Western Newfoundland. I'm begging the government to go look at it – begging them. I'll even arrange the meeting, and I'll walk out. I don't want to be a part of it; I just want the meetings.

That's not much to ask. For the seniors, for the people in Western Newfoundland that haven't got a doctor, who's spending eight, 10 hours at emergency, some of them leaving out of frustration or pain, that's not much to ask a government official, who is elected to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, either the Minister of Health or the Premier to meet with these groups and get this resolved, because it can be resolved.

I can assure you, once the meeting is held I will walk away from it. I'll walk away from it and I won't say another word, because I'm convinced that if the Minister of Health and the Premier sits down with these two groups, the nurse practitioners and the seniors about the cataract surgery, I am confident they would say we can do this fairly easy.

Once again, I'm repeating myself and I won't do it anymore. I'm asking, again, to have meetings with the people in Western Newfoundland, who can make a difference with our health care, because we hear it every day, some horror stories about our health care; how we haven't got enough doctors; people got no family doctors. I'm giving solutions here that people are coming to me and saying we got solutions. Yet, we won't give the solutions and the government won't give me the option to give them the solutions. It's sad. It's actually sad, and

for whatever reason, I don't know. I really don't know what the reasons are. I really, truly don't know.

I ask any Member here without a doctor in their communities, if you had an option, wouldn't you expect to get meetings arranged? Wouldn't you expect it? As I said, those nurse practitioners, they had over 4,000 visits so far – 4,000 – in Western Newfoundland. That a lot, that's a lot for three, and they could do a lot more.

So I'm urging again, the government, to reconsider the way they have meetings, or who they meet with, or however they do it. I don't know what the procedure is. I'm asking you to change those procedures so we can put dignity of life back to Newfoundland with our number one issue in this province right now – the number one issue is health care in our province and close behind is the quality of living, because the cost of living has gone up so much. But I can assure you that the health care is a major issue that we can help out on the West Coast.

I'm going to bring up another issue to the Minister of Education. I was asked to bring this up to the minister, it's very brief, is sign language. There are a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador who need sign language. A person asked me would I bring it up the Minister of Education in the House and I committed I would. To see if there's any way to get some – if there's any class or anything in school that you could do a program or a course in school so a lot of the kids will not be so isolated in the schools. So some of the kids, some of their friends, other people would be able to learn sign language.

I ask the Minister of Education if there's any option that can be done to help out people who need sign language to associate with (inaudible).

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm not sure if you were paying attention while I was in the Chair a few minutes ago, but I took some liberties to announce that Mattea Roach just won her 21st game of *Jeopardy!* I wanted to start off my remarks because there's a lot of – maybe some possible parallels with what is happening with this amazing young woman. She's only 23; she's from Nova Scotia, now living in Toronto. I think the whole country is claiming her.

You know, in these troubled times, we all need heroes and they come from different directions. I just wanted to read to the Legislature here tonight, Mattea says her reason for success – she's won 21 games, she's now slowly becoming one of the top winners of all time on that amazing show. The final *Jeopardy!* question tonight was in the category of national anthems. So here's the answer: Terre de nos Aïeux follows the title in the French version of this anthem.

Quite remarkable, because she says that her number one trait and secret to success is luck. Her second feature of great success is her memory. And, finally, it's her thirst for knowledge. She says it's these three traits which are giving her this amazing run that a lot of us who watch and participate in different kinds of things.

But, anyway, I just wanted to mention that because I think for this province to really go forward we need to realize what our assets are. We certainly have tremendous natural resources offshore and onshore. Most importantly, we have an amazing workforce. Amazing human resources, the next generations that are coming, the attitudes that we all share. The reasons why we're all in this room. We love this place. Even those of us who weren't fortunate enough to be born here, but have come to fall in love with it and commit to it – I'll speak for myself – I can't think of a better place in the world, despite all its challenges and so on. It's a tremendous place to contribute to society, and I believe everyone in this room.

Similar with Mattea, it's going to take a very determined group of shrewd thinkers to get us through the hurdles that are in front of us, whether it be climate change, which I'm always speaking to; our fiscal challenges; or our

demographic challenges. So many other issues that we're dealing with, but we will get through it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a little bit of time tonight to talk about something that is right here in front of us. And staying with the theme of the subamendment of non-confidence and the discussion around the role of Canada and what Canada is doing, I wanted to talk about some of that Canadian presence that we have within our province that we actually don't talk a lot about in this House and that is the Department of National Defence. I speak from a great personal experience. In fact, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for 5 Wing Goose Bay.

In 1987, I was working elsewhere in the country and I heard about an opportunity to support the NATO base proposal in Goose Bay. At the time, it was called Canadian Forces Base Goose Bay. I applied to work on the environmental assessment and the rest is history. It has been an amazing run.

At the time, in the '80s, and as we all know the history of, whether it be, Goose Bay, Gander, Stephenville or even St. John's, the role that we played and our strategic location on the Northeastern edge of this continent of North America is really an amazing asset. The determined workforce that we have here and so on is also something that builds on it.

So back to my hometown of Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the Wing – this is a very important asset. Back in the late '90s and early part of the 2000s, you know there were foreign nations that were conducting low-level flight training and other kinds of training from Britain, Germany, Italy, Holland, we actually had other allies who would be there on occasion but those ones were the main allies that were flying there. And do you know what? For every dollar that Canada was investing in the operations of Goose Bay, at the time, foreign nations were spending another two or three bucks. Think about that. I mean, talk about a business case, and I come from the private sector. If you invested one and knew you got another one or two, you wouldn't stop.

I found myself in 2003 chairing what would become known as the Goose Bay Citizens Coalition. This was a group of people from the private sector, from government, different levels of government, Indigenous leadership, folks who were connected with the Air Force, with different circles and so on. And we became an incredible, interesting grassroots force that found itself here in this building around, I would say, November of 2003.

The premier of the day had just been elected. We managed to make a great impression on him and what we needed to do, because at that time it was very clear that Ottawa was considering closing down 5 Wing Goose Bay. We argued on all those points I made before, and many more, as to the merits of this. It took a great, determined effort, and I'll thank the government of the day for standing forward with us.

Off we went to Ottawa, and I think it was just before Christmas and just after, we found ourselves in the prime minister's office sitting and talking about the importance of the base and the role that we needed to all realize we're going to need to play to ensure its sustainability.

I'm very pleased to say that, over the subsequent years, we actually found ourselves in 2005-2006 in a bidding war between the two main parties of the country, the Conservatives and the Liberals. Lo and behold, we went from a place that was definitely destined for closure to being involved in a bidding war between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

It was an interesting exercise for myself to learn some of that political arena and, lo and behold, the base has continued to maintain an important presence. Just recently, Serco, the service provider for 5 Wing, has just been awarded a \$694-million contract for operations over the next 10 years, with opportunities to extend for an additional two five-year increments, if exercised, represents a \$1.5-billion contract for the next 20 years.

So we have an amazing facility located on the northeastern part of our continent, and I have to tell you there's a great friend of mine – I'm going to mention his name – Lieutenant-Colonel

Guy Parisien. He's the commander of 5 Wing. He was just in town here, I think, last week. He got to meet with some of the different officials, I think, here in the room.

He is leading an amazing team at the Wing that is playing a pivotal role. We provide NORAD response right now through North Bay and then out of the United States. I don't know if many of you were aware but we often have, for example, Russian Tupolev bombers coming off our coast, fighter jets, which are based in Bagotville, 505 miles away, political lobbying, will scramble to Goose Bay and then will mount the defence. Again, the importance of Goose Bay and where we sit on the coast.

We've been doing this for decades. Now, with the heightened alert and sensitivity and the fact that hey, just across the top is Russia – a country that I worked many years in – which has become a belligerent in terms of our posture for Canadian geopolitics, it's a real big challenge for us.

With this challenge, comes an opportunity. That's what I wanted to speak to government about because I would suggest, just what Goose Bay alone can contribute, and the opportunities – and you've heard the Defence minister say just recently, she's working to increase Canada's commitment to defence spending to the NATO requirement, which is 2 per cent of GDP. There has been a substantial increase. I don't think they quite got there in the budget, but she's certainly working on it.

There are massive amounts of money available for investment in infrastructure, in training, in materials and equipment and so on. We need to realize that. Just as I stand here, late on a Tuesday night trying to get everybody's attention, everybody in this House needs to realize there's opportunity in Goose Bay; there are opportunities in Gander; there are opportunities here in the CFS station here in St. John's. There are other locations in Corner Brook, Stephenville and so on. Every one of those locations and many more have opportunities to step up. We all need to create – and I'm going back to Mattea –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting too loud.

P. TRIMPER: – I'm suggesting that we need to get our heads together. If people in this House would actually sit down and think about it, think about what you can bring to the table and bring our collective lobbying, I can tell you right now we would stop losing contracts right now, which have recently been awarded to Greenwood. We are in a serious competition right now with Cold Lake for maintaining the attention of the German air force.

We are also in competition with Bagotville, Quebec; I heard some of the Members talking earlier about the frustrations of Quebec. I can tell you, if we're not paying attention, we're going to watch a lot of these opportunities go by. And they're there for us. The federal government is spending billions and we can decide, well, that's a federal responsibility, let them just go do their thing, or we can realize this is in each of our backyards.

I've just named, I would say, seven or eight MHAs here right now who have an opportunity, and maybe they haven't even thought about it. I'm proposing, as part of this budget discussion here this evening, that we should find ourselves again with a coalition. And this time I'm offering to take the wisdom and the experience that we had in Goose Bay – we ran the Goose Bay Citizens Coalition for some six years; it was tremendously successful. We need a similar model. I would love to take my previous experience, connections here now with everyone in this room and share with you some ideas. I think there's a great situation there.

Just a few more things that are going on in Goose Bay, because I want to reach back also to the folks back at home, who elected me in Lake Melville. Speaker, 5 Wing is really an important hub; I call it my sixth community, after Sheshatshiu, Mud Lake, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, North West River and Churchill Falls. And 5 Wing is itself, its own community.

I am often on the base, working with and socializing with folks. We have close to 100 people in uniform. Many of them, often I will have a beer with them on one Friday night and

then two weeks later they could be deployed to Afghanistan or in Operation UNIFIER. The Member's statement that I gave today is very personal for me. The Member for Terra Nova and I we had a little chat today because of his previous experience and I thank him for his service. But we both recognized the role that people like Melanie Lake – and perhaps she was inspired by the military presence. There are great opportunities for us. We need to think about them and we need to go after them.

Again, at Goose Bay, Lieutenant-Colonel Parisien is in charge of Operation Noble Defender. This is a NORAD exercise. It runs three to four times a year. It involves several NATO countries. I bet you almost nobody in this room knows about it and it is happening off our coast. The United States Air Force and the Danes are involved, Canada, others. And we are preparing for cruise missile attacks, enemy aircraft attacks and these are simulations, yeah, but it is all about a state of readiness. As I said with my Member's statement today, you look at the people like the Lieutenant-Colonel Lake and what she is doing and how Ukraine is benefitting from that.

So, unfortunately, there is a very important humanitarian role to play here but let's face it, folks, there is an economic opportunity. I am suggesting that we, as a Legislature, and with each of the locations that we have, let's get our heads together and see what we can do to come up with some real synergy. I know we can do it. If you can watch a 23-year-old win 21 episodes of *Jeopardy!* I am sure this Legislature can figure out how to get the attention of Ottawa and show them what we can do in terms of the defence of Canada.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

So, Speaker, what I will be talking about is related to an event I attended today and how it affects my district. I guess it goes to the whole notion, Speaker, that a budget is about priorities; about where we choose to spend money and where we choose not to; where do we assign value; what do we consider valueless.

I was invited to speak at a CUPE convention today the theme of which is Reject the Reset. Some of the key issues that are important to them is pay equity. Basically, they reject the whole notion that pay equity for women is expensive, costly and, basically, it will be a meaningless, minor and non-meaningful adjustments for a limited number of women. They totally reject that, certainly for the women who would be affected. Yet, we're hearing that, we've heard that in this House already and we've seen it in the media.

That's a priority that should be a priority, about lifting people up in this province. Whether we do it on our own or we do it with the help of Ottawa is immaterial, but somewhere along the line that's got to be a priority.

Early childhood educators: what's our priority when it comes to early childhood educators? What is the value we place on our children, on looking after our children, of making it possible for parents to carry on with a career? Well, it would make sense, Speaker, that we have early childhood educators who are well paid. CUPE is looking for \$25 an hour, on a wage grid, starting at that, as an indication of their value. What has government put forward? Four hundred thousand, Speaker, to study pay equity, to further study it, to do another study; there are plenty of studies on it. Most of the people who are in early childhood education are women.

We've got \$400,000 for that, but we can put \$5 million into a Rothschild report, an outside company to determine what resources we're going to sell off. I can tell you, Speaker, that my phone has been ringing off the hook with regard to – I've got a folder up there now of parents who are looking for child care and some people who are looking to start child care, but we've become the centre, the clearing house for it, and they're desperate.

That brings me into another issue: housing. Noam Chomsky said that privatization, the strategy of privatization is to defund, make sure things don't work, people get angry and then you hand it over to private capital. We're seeing that, I believe, in the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing very clearly.

I spoke with a number of workers in transition houses who are seeing increasing numbers of homelessness, more people staying in the transition homes who are victims of domestic violence or homeless as a result of that. And they're finding that the people who are staying in these transition homes are either staying longer, they have more complex needs and they have no place to put them. The main reason, Speaker, that they are having this difficulty is that a lot of the houses, especially Newfoundland and Labrador houses, are not fixed up and available for residency.

The people in Marystown told me that they can't have rent supplements in Marystown because they have vacant units, but the units – 30 or so – are in disrepair and uninhabitable.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: Thank you for that. I appreciate the support, Minister.

Here is the basic thing: insufficient staff to do the job. This is what we're hearing. There are not enough staff in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to do the job. Can't get the contracts to do it at a reasonable price, and there are delays. And there is certainly in St. John's, in my district, I can tell you, the same issue. So that's Marystown, that's Labrador, that's Central Newfoundland, that's Western Newfoundland, the same thing. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units are in disrepair, uninhabitable; people there's a crunch.

So it would seem, based on –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting too loud.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: I guess as they pointed out, it seems as if it's being deliberately done not to get these units fixed up.

Now, today, CBC had contacted me about the decline in the downtown centre. Since I was elected in 2019, and my predecessor Ms. Rogers, dealt with the same thing: phone calls with regard to crime in the area. Residents are concerned about public safety; they want to see proactive supervision by the police. I compare it, Speaker – and my colleague for Bonavista will certainly appreciate this – to supervision in a school. It was never about being reactive; it was always about having a presence there in the corridors so that you can prevent problems.

And this is what they're asking for, in many ways, to have a police presence that is not just responding to the calls, but is there to get to know the residents of the area and the neighbourhood.

So here is a situation back in the fall of a single mother who had willingly given up her children to deal with her own substance abuse and addictions issue. She had to get her life in order, and then went back to get custody of her children. She was going to be put into a house in one of the streets in this neighbourhood. She called our office; she was in panic. Her comment was: I cannot go back there. I cannot go there, it will jeopardize everything I've worked – it will jeopardize my sobriety, my recovery, it will jeopardize my family. She was frantic.

Now, we were able to get her moved somewhere else, but no neighbourhood should be that bad, that people do not want to move in there because they know that there is a drug issue there. There are multiple houses where drugs are being dealt with, and we need to deal with it. There's a role here, Speaker, for all. It's not an easy solution, but there's a role here for the provincial government, for the municipal government, the police and, yes, the federal government as well.

We ask for standards. One of the problems in the neighbourhood are slum landlords. We've asked for standards when it comes to putting people into these homes, to make sure that they are able to live with dignity. We are, after all, putting public money into paying rent for people. They

should be in decent homes and landlords should be held to account.

We also have landlords who are refusing to rent to people who are on income support. Usually it goes like this: Where do you work? I don't work, I'm on income support. You never hear from them again. And part of it is that income support recipients are getting the reputation of difficulty. Why? Because there are people who are difficult to house. There are people who have mental health and addictions issues that need supports. I used to say this with teaching, inclusion is not simply putting every student into the class. It's about inclusive education, where you put the supports in place.

So when we are putting people into housing, what are the supports in place so that they have the ability to thrive? They have the supports they need so that the neighbours around them are safe and that they are safe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: Thank you.

It is one of the reasons, Speaker, that we have asked for – to me, if there is one form of housing that should be banished, that is bed-sitting rooms. Every place that we pay rent for, a person should have their own kitchen and their own bathroom where they have privacy and dignity and they are free from a threat from anyone else. But instead, we put them with slum landlords where that is not done.

I asked as a priority, Speaker, in our budget submission that we build another community centre in the eastern end of my district that would help create a sense of community and a sense of neighbourhood. I will speak from experience here from the people – because I have mentioned both the Froude Avenue Community Centre and the Buckmaster's Circle Community Centre and the work that they do in creating a neighbourhood environment of creating a community, and that is what is needed when you are invested in the area.

The other part about this, I would argue, is that we need to start investing more in the community centres we have. Making sure that the people who work there are able to afford health care; they have a decent salary; they have a pension at the end of it. That is not the case. They are working above and beyond, but they are needed. I can tell you, as a teacher, they are also doing yeoman's work in making sure that the students have the supports for their academics that they have. That is an all-around solution to poverty.

I will tell you that some of the issues in the neighbourhood have to do with the drug houses. There needs to be greater police presence because while the police are dealing with the big fish, the ones who are bringing it in, we still need to know and deal with the people who are dealing drugs out of their houses. And it is bringing a criminal element there – organized crime even.

They are looking, basically, for some help with this. When I was first elected, I think it was on Bond Street, Speaker, there was a killing outside of an emergency shelter. Since that time, there have been several other murders in that part of town and it is no wonder that the people in the area are feeling unsafe. They are feeling neglected. Basically, all levels whether it is the provincial, federal, municipal and the police have written them off. It is something we would not tolerate in our own neighbourhoods.

Of course, I'll go back to this. The root of poverty, of hunger, is income. We can solve a lot of problems here by dealing with it, about priorities. Now the five-point plan is a good stopgap measure, I guess, as far as stopgap measures go. It's like pulling people who are drowning out of the water. But at some point we've got to stop pulling people out of the water, and we've got to figure out why they're ending up in the water in the first place, and stop it there.

I brought up in this House before that a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives noted in a BC study that raising the income of the bottom quintile of the population, the poorest quintile up to the next level, actually results in a

saving of 6.7 per cent to the health care system. I think it's over \$200 million if we did the same here. That would be the savings.

So that's one thing we can do. But the other thing we can do for a small number of people is when they decide that those who are on income support, when they decide to return to upgrade their education, when they decide to make the step to get off income support, that they are able to keep their drug card. So that they are not disadvantaged, so that they are not in panic about their own health care, their own serious health care needs.

Secondly, can we not strike the committee of guaranteed basic income? Prince Edward Island – little PEI – all three parties, the PCs who are in government, the Liberals –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: Oh no, this is a compliment to you, don't worry – this is a compliment. The same idea of poverty reduction, Speaker, this is good. They're the Premier, so that's fine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: The Liberals and the Green Party, and I'm sure if the NDP were actually the House they would be signing it as well. But they signed a letter to the federal government demanding basically that they put a province-wide basic income in place in the province. That's PEI. Wouldn't it be great – I know on this side, for sure, we would go along with it, but wouldn't it be great if we all started that all-party Committee on guaranteed basic income to look at a pilot, just to explore the idea and see how it would benefit our people in this province?

Let's legislate a living minimum wage. I have said this in my budget speech, if it is a problem for small businesses then let's give them a break in their business tax. Let's bring in pay equity legislation. If it is only going to affect a small number of women – that's what it is – it is not going to cost that much but it will be meaningful to the women who benefit from it, then let's do it. It will raise their level – it would raise them out of poverty.

Let's bring in anti-replacement worker legislation so that we don't have the longest lockout in history like in D-J Composites in Gander. Let's really start looking at just transition legislation that involves workers and unions that is meaningful and that protects workers and Newfoundlanders and the economy as we transition to a greener economy.

As I said at the beginning, it is about priorities. Where do we spend our money? To me, there is a neighbourhood in my district, Speaker, that could use the investment and the priority. A lot of the measures I have put here that are dealing with mental health issues, supports, supportive housing, increased police presence, a community-based approach and housing standards are all going to be helpful. I will focus on this again.

The Grace General Hospital site: before that is given over to a developer to put up high-priced condominiums, there has got to be room there for affordable and supportive housing for the people who need it. Emergency shelters are not the answer. It's not the answer. It's a stopgap measure. So, if anything, let's put the money into developing supportive housing, similar to what is down at the Ches Penney Centre of Hope for those who need it and affordable housing for families and single people who need it as well.

That's my desire in a budget. Those are the priorities that I have because I think if you are helping people like that, you're going to cut down on crime. You're going to cut down on the admissions to the health care system. You're going to cut down on unemployment. You name it. All of those things, in addition to what I have heard here in this House tonight, when it comes to health care. That's going to lift people up in this province; not selling out of our public assets. It is going to come down to lifting people up at the grassroots level. That's where it starts; that's where it is meaningful.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

S. CROCKER: Absolutely.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the subamendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: Motion defeated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: My God, Mr. Speaker, I was about to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it has been a long day and I almost had to get my election signs out.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by my friend for Conception Bay South, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.