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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

First, I'd like to begin by welcoming Juanita Stone, the former mayor of Red Bay, and her spouse, Bob, here today. Welcome to the gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Cape St. Francis, Bay Verte - Green Bay, Ferryland, Lake Melville and Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

For the past 10 years, on March 20, the United Nations has published the World Happiness Report, a global ranking happiness study based upon social, economic and environmental statistics. From that report, the International Day of Happiness was established with the goal to make people realize the importance of happiness in their lives.

Speaker, today I'm happy to report that Action for Happiness in Killick Coast has begun in my district, thanks to advocates Crystal Murphy and Cassie Manning-Dyke. Both ladies, along with other like-minded individuals, are helping to promote a movement of people to create a happier world together among volunteer groups, organizations and communities.

Thanks to their ongoing efforts, all towns in my district have signed proclamations recognizing International Day of Happiness in an effort to raise awareness, help encourage people to become more involved and to promote the benefits of well-being and good mental health. That is something each one of us should pay close attention to.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Crystal Murphy and Cassie Manning-Dyke for their contribution in bringing Action

for Happiness to my district and I hope this movement will travel across our beautiful province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the late Guy J. Bailey, a well-respected businessman who passed away on Wednesday, April 27, 2022, at the age of 89. Guy J. will be remembered as a great community builder, having owned and operated numerous businesses for decades.

Guy J. Bailey Ltd. has been in operation for over 55 years, employing 100 local workers year-round. Each of his children have his entrepreneurial and community-minded spirit. There have been numerous businesses over the years, including Dorset Manor, Baie Verte Gifts and Flowers, Baie Verte Recycling, Sears Outlet, Bailey's Bus Service, a garage and, more recently, Shoreline Aggregates Inc.

In his retirement years, Guy J. purchased and renovated a vacant church building in Grand Falls-Windsor into a retirement home. Later, as a resident in the Deer Lake and Baie Verte retirement homes, Guy J. was known for always sharing a smile, leading singalongs, playing the piano and sharing the Scripture.

Guy J. Bailey has given his family an incredible legacy of love, support and a most generous giving heart.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in offering condolences to the Bailey family and the entire Baie Verte peninsula.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I rise in this hon. House to recognize the Southern Shore Senior Breakers who were awarded the Herder trophy as the 2022 Avalon East Senior Hockey champs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Just two weeks ago, the Breakers swept the Clarendville Caribous four games to none in the Herder Memorial finals to take the prestigious Herder Memorial Trophy back to the Southern Shore.

The team is mainly comprised of players who are graduates from both the Southern Shore Breakers and the Goulds Minor Hockey Association, but there are members of the team that hail from all over the province.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to be a part of a winning Herder team with the Southern Shore Breakers and I'm glad to see Herder number six finally make its way back up the shore. Winning the Herder is not only an accomplishment for the players on the ice, but it also reflects on the irreplaceable hard work put in by the volunteers and fans. Without the contributions of volunteers, senior hockey on the Southern Shore would not be where it is today.

Mr. Speaker, I have been told that the planning has already started to bring Herder number seven back to the Southern Shore.

Go Breakers Go!

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

As the world responds to the escalating war in Ukraine, our province can be proud of the contribution by Lieutenant Colonel Melanie Lake from Churchill Falls.

After growing up in Labrador, Lieutenant Colonel Lake graduated with an engineering degree from the Royal Military College, then an impressive career that includes: leadership roles

with all three Canadian Combat Engineer Regiments; instructor at the Forces Leadership and Recruit School; senior officer with the Chief of Defence Staff; and three deployments to Afghanistan as part of Operation ATHENA.

As Commander of the Regiment in Petawawa, Lieutenant Colonel Lake assumed command of Operation UNIFIER in March 2021. This bilateral mission between Ukraine and Canada provides military training for thousands of security forces and their National Guard. President Zelenskyy recently highlighted the UNIFIER training mission and thanked Canada for improving the defence capability of his besieged nation.

Lieutenant Colonel Lake volunteers tirelessly with Mriya Aid to provide non-lethal survival equipment for Ukrainian defenders and in the resettlement of Afghans who worked with her and other Canadian soldiers to our country.

I would ask this Legislature to thank Lieutenant Colonel Melanie Lake, a proud graduate of Eric G. Lambert School for her leadership in support of those dealing with extreme adversity, both on and off the battlefield.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Town of Brigus in the District of Harbour Main can now add another unique distinction to its colourful history.

Randy Spracklin and his father, Scott Spracklin, have brought national attention and have captured a broad interest in authentic home construction and restoration with their popular television series entitled *Rock Solid Builds*, which airs on the HGTV Canada Network.

Randy described the show as being 100 per cent authentic and unscripted. The second season just finished airing on April 7 and Randy and his

team are hoping for a third. HGTV were looking for an East Coast show and when they reached out, Randy emailed back and, as they say, the rest is history.

The creative talents of this father and son team, along with their eight crew members and co-workers, is a demonstration of ingenuity, skill, professionalism and humour – all of which is on full display for the world to see.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Randy Spracklin and his team on their success and for showcasing our province's beauty and the communities in which we live.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

K. HOWELL: Speaker, in just a few short days, municipalities across the province will meet for the first ever Municipal Awareness Week from May 9-13.

In previous years, we have celebrated Municipal Awareness Day. This year, in partnership with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators of Newfoundland and Labrador, we are designating a full week to celebrate and acknowledge the importance of local governance to residents all across the province.

Municipal government is responsible for providing critical services that enhance the quality of life for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Dedicated mayors, councillors, staff and volunteers are essential for the effective governance of municipalities. Their work, supported by the collaboration and partnership and involvement of residents is essential for active, sustainable and vibrant communities.

Providing stability and predictability for municipalities is so important. With this in mind, *Budget 2022* provides more than \$141 million to maintain key programs such as the Special Assistance Grants, the Community Enhancement Employment Program, the Canada Community-Building Fund and not less than \$22 million per year for Municipal Operating Grants for at least the next three years.

Speaker, cities and towns are busy organizing various activities for Municipal Awareness Week and I encourage my hon. colleagues and all residents to take some time next week to recognize the contribution of all those working in municipal sectors and to participate in activities that municipal councils will be hosting to mark this inaugural event.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Speaker, my colleagues in the Official Opposition join the minister in celebrating the first ever Municipal Awareness Week. As a former mayor myself of my beautiful hometown of Pouch Cove, I understand first-hand the important role that individuals play at the municipal level, whether as a mayor, councillor, staff member, firefighter or community volunteer.

Speaker, these are the individuals who are often the first point of contact for an issue with any level of government or to organize a sports team, a recreation activity in their community, or to answer the call in the time of trouble. We all owe a debt of gratitude to these individuals who offer themselves to their communities, often for decades, with little or no remuneration.

This is why, under the regionalization plan which was announced by the minister, we need some fundamental questions answered: How much is it going to cost; what will be the new services that will be provided; what will the model look like? These are recurring questions that I have heard from residents all over the province that need to be answered as we look upon the importance of municipalities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

We take this opportunity to thank those who serve in local governance, all our elected officials and employees. While municipalities are called upon to provide so many basic services, they often lack the funding and resources to do so. Therefore, we are calling on government to enter into more cost-sharing initiatives with municipalities and explore new ways for them to raise the much-needed funds themselves.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Thirty-four community organizations and health care providers have signed a letter calling on the Liberal government to increase access to rapid tests. In particular, for seniors, vulnerable people, and low-wage workers.

I ask the Premier: Will this government listen to these organizations or ignore them?

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

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

We have a rapid test kit distribution program, which is done under the guidance of Public Health. We get a small but steady supply from the federal government, and those are allocated to areas where Public Health feels they will do the most good: daycares, educational establishments, personal care homes, congregate living settings and the like. We keep a small reserve against the next wave and we use what we get, Mr. Speaker. This is all done on the advice of Public Health.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

For those who can't afford to buy the rapid tests, this is a way to release their anxiety and to address their particular health needs.

Speaker, for seniors, vulnerable people and low-wage workers, access to rapid tests is essential. Wide access to rapid tests, like in other provinces, can help people determine their level of risk and help them keep themselves and their community safe.

I ask the Premier: Will this government invest in making the tools more readily available?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As the minister suggested, we are in constant conversation with Public Health, Dr. Fitzgerald and her team as to how to best use these tests. I think it has been proven that how we've used

this test to date has gotten us to a good point in this pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

Other jurisdictions have offered them broadly and they've had to roll back, Mr. Speaker. So some of the points made by the Member opposite aren't accurate today. They tried to provide them broadly. They couldn't provide them broadly and they recognized that it didn't actually achieve the goal that they set out to do. We are constantly re-evaluating how we provide those tests to the public, whether it's through the education system or beyond and we will continue to do so in consultation with Dr. Fitzgerald and her team, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

We are hearing from thousands or Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly those vulnerable in low incomes, and I know the other Members in this House must be hearing it too, where they would benefit from access to rapid testing, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier removed COVID-19 restrictions but has not provided the tools needed by seniors and vulnerable people to navigate this new normal. In other provinces, if a senior wants to visit family, they can take a rapid test for some sense of assurance. There is no such option here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the Premier: Why are seniors and vulnerable populations being forced to pay out of pocket for what they can receive for free elsewhere in Canada?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The rapid test policy approach is determined by Public Health. We also have what is one of the more liberal PCR and rapid PCR testing programs. So if a person is concerned about their COVID status or exposure, they can follow that flow chart. If they need a PCR, rapid or

otherwise, it will be provided and it will be free of charge. If they do not need one, Mr. Speaker, they do not need one.

The rapid test kits that are available, are available where they will do the most use for the most people and we keep a small supply against the next wave, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would think the most vulnerable would even accept a Liberal test if they could get one, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Taxi operators are struggling with rising costs of fuel and high costs of insurance. They are asking for support but so far the government is not taking action.

I ask the Premier: What are you doing to support taxi operators so they will be ready to welcome visitors during Come Home Year?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As I said in the House before, we are happy to meet with the taxis, and we did. The minister and I spent half an hour with several of the members of the taxi community and we talked with them about solutions, about how to better their employment opportunities for their drivers, how to streamline it within the department of motor vehicle registration and how to make it more affordable for their drivers to get access to the employment opportunities that they provide.

I'm happy to say it was a positive meeting, we both took away action items and the minister has agreed to further those action items, Mr. Speaker. It was a positive meeting with a good outcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

I hope we move this in a timely fashion, because the Come Home Year is coming here and it's very important to us promoting our tourism here and the expats want to come home. But more importantly it's to the thousands of people who work in the taxi industry and what that means to our economy. That's more important at this point right now.

Speaker, taxi operators are treated differently than anyone else and have only one option for insurance. This means higher costs for companies, which trickles down to higher costs for seniors and people who rely on taxis for trips to grocery stores or to medical appointments. It's one more way the cost of living continues to increase in our province for those who can't afford it, or can afford it the least.

I ask the Premier: When will you act to support the taxi industry and those who rely on it, particularly around the cost of insurance?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As I said in my previous answer we've worked with the taxi community to ensure that we can help, using government tools to make it more affordable for them and the taxis that are on the road. We appreciate the service they provide; we appreciate their contribution to the economy; we appreciate their contribution to Come Home Year and their importance in that.

That's why we had the meeting with them, when they requested it, and we are actioning several items that came out of that, Mr. Speaker, which will ultimately make it more affordable for them and the drivers on the road. It was the ideas they suggested, not the ones that we brought to the table. We're happy to act on them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Just recently the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association spoke to the huge backlog in surgeries in this province, approaching 7,000 in St. John's alone. The Medical Association has called on government to set a target date for bringing this backlog down to pre-pandemic level.

I ask the minister: Will he agree to establish a target date that can give some assurance to patients that there is hope of timely surgery?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

From personal experience, waiting for surgery can be a worrisome time and we are certainly keen to do anything and everything that's reasonable to help remediate this. This is a situation that affects all of Canada; there are 35,000 people in Regina alone on a surgical wait-list at the moment.

We are in the process of setting up a meeting between my department and the Medical Association to share that information so we can get everybody on the same page. We need to work with the clinicians, with the physicians and Eastern Health to prioritize those patients, to come up with a plan, to put the resources in place and to get this off the ground. We're committed to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Official Opposition has called for updates on surgical wait times on multiple occasions. The minister today is downplaying that severity. He talks about other provinces. We're concerned about this province. I was elected by the people

of this province to look after the people in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: The minister has written the NLMA agreeing to meet on this problem, and it's a long-standing issue.

I ask the minister: Why does it fall on the physicians to update on this surgery backlog, rather than his own department?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, certainly I can appreciate and empathize, as the minister has, with people who are on wait-lists. Certainly, I can feel that frustration as a former surgeon myself, having to tell patients that their surgeries are delayed.

That said, we already have a meeting scheduled with the NLMA this week to further discuss this particular topic, Mr. Speaker. As we've done in the past, we're willing to work collaboratively with the NLMA. This is not an adversarial relationship. We all want what's best. We all want to eliminate the barriers for patients to get the care that they require, whether that's surgical or nonsurgical services, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's encouraging to hear that they're going to meet. I mean, this just didn't happen overnight. This should have been happening long ago, meeting to deal with this.

The backlog of surgeries had a real impact on people both physically and mentally. The NLMA has called for an online dashboard to report the number of backlog surgeries in our province and asked for it to be updated monthly.

Will the minister commit to this request?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Certainly, sharing of data is key in this exercise. In actual fact, prior to COVID, I had a very initial meeting with the NLMA around the numbers and the data. I think it's important that we all get on the same page. Our different sources of data may have some gaps and overlap.

In terms of how this is reported, the NLMA may have a view on how they would like that done and we would certainly not want to put anything up there that would cause them challenges, beyond what they face already.

As the Premier says, this is a collaborative approach, we've met with them, as we did with the College of Family Practitioners earlier this week, and everybody is on the same page. We need to work together to fix this and we're prepared to do that.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I have a quote from last year from the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality regarding pay equity legislation. It's something that we certainly are committed to do.

I'm going to keep this question a simple yes or no: Will the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality table pay equity legislation in this sitting of the House of Assembly?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to say this is the first time I've ever seen women's issues raised at prominently as they have been for this sitting. I am happy to see that and to thank the hon. Member, of course.

As we know, pay equity has certainly been the topic of conversation throughout this sitting. I'm happy to say work continues. It's across government. The Department of Justice is involved. Treasury Board is involved and, of course, Women and Gender Equality and the labour division. So it's something that is ongoing.

I also want to remind the hon. Member that simple pay equity legislation is not a silver bullet that is going to change or solve overnight the gender wage gap. That is the unfortunate. I think everybody is missing the definition. I encourage everybody to read up on the definitions of pay equity and the gender wage gap.

What is important is that we are doing concrete things to get women into the workforce and to negotiate –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the minister seems to defer authority to other departments. So let's see who has the authority.

I ask the Minister Responsible for Labour: Will you table pay equity legislation in this sitting of the House of Assembly, yes or no?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and Responsible for Labour.

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

As my previous colleague had said, it is a discussion that we are always having with respect to departments. It's multidepartmental. It's an issue that is facing many jurisdictions across this country and across this globe. We're going to continue to work together to try to find solutions to better improve the aspects for pay equity right across this province and, hopefully,

get to a place where it's equitable across all parts of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, again, empty words about ongoing discussions.

I ask the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board: Will you table pay equity legislation in this sitting of the House of Assembly, yes or no?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

This is a very important topic. It is an important topic for women and I do believe for men as well. I will say, Speaker, that the Job Evaluation System that has been long adopted within government ensures a level and equal playing field across all of government. So the Job Evaluation System has been well established within government for, I would say, at least decades. I think that is very important to ensure that we have equity and equality across employment throughout the civil services.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, Speaker, still no commitment to table pay equity legislation it appears.

Speaker, I've also been hearing from employees of Eastern Health, for example, who work alongside males with the same roles and responsibilities, and one woman in particular feels she's paid less because she's a woman. I've also heard from an executive-level employee of a government Crown corporation who feels she

also is financially discriminated against because of her gender.

I ask the minister: Why are you ignoring concerns of these women?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will read this into the record, of course, for the hon. Member: Newfoundland and Labrador has reactive pay equity legislation in place and it's via the *Labour Standards Act* and the Human Rights Act. The Human Rights Act is complaints-based legislation that prohibits discrimination in employment, including pay rates and gender.

So there certainly are recourses that can be taken here in this province. Again, as my hon. colleague said, there is no discrimination for wages in the public service.

I will say, the onus is on everyone: private sector, public sector, across Newfoundland and Labrador and the country, for that matter, to do what we can to help close the gender wage gap. Because the gender wage gap is what the Member's referring to, it's not pay equity. Pay equity is not the silver bullet and will not make the gender wage gap close overnight. We all know that, we see that here in Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario and across the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

It's important that the people out there watching this on our TV channel realize that's why it's called Question Period, because you just don't get any answers.

Speaker, right now, people in this province are struggling with the high cost of living.

I simply ask the minister: Why does she refuse to listen to her own constituents and to people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are asking for a home heat rebate program?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly want to always have a respectful workplace in this environment.

I will say this is a very serious and difficult situation for the people of the province, indeed provincially, globally and, nationally, a difficult situation. We all know what's happening around the world, and coming out of a pandemic has exasperated the situation. That's why we put \$142 million in the budget to assist people.

The Member continues to refer to the home heat rebate program that was rolled into the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit, which both have been increased by 10 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the minister talks about a program that was rolled in when the price of home heat fuel was about 70-something cents a litre. It's three times that right now. Home heating fuel, gasoline prices, rising food prices, they're all hurting people of the province. The five-point plan or the cost-of-living plan that was introduced pre-budget, that's not working, that's not making it work. The budget, it's not hitting its targets.

So, again, I ask the minister: How high must fuel prices go or home heating prices go before the minister will intercede?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I will say that \$142 million has been contributed back to the people of the province, and that is significant. Would we like to do more? Of course we would like to do more; of course we would like to do more.

I've heard the Member opposite refer to Alberta, for example. We're doing every bit as much as Alberta is doing when they eliminated their provincial gasoline tax – this is equivalent to the provincial gasoline tax.

Will we continue to see what more we can do? It really depends on the revenues of government, Speaker. As you know, in this budget, we have no revenue increases, no fee increases, no tax increases, Speaker, all that. And we still have a \$351-million deficit and a \$17-billion debt.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm amazed that the minister can stand up and say there are no tax increases, when they are about to implement a sugar tax and we just had an increase in the carbon tax. Again, the minister loves to give excuses as to why she can't take any action. A lot of times she blames Ottawa.

I ask the minister: Have you talked to your federal counterpart about making changes to the carbon tax, or making changes to the HST so we're not paying tax on tax?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I certainly will say again, a respectful workplace environment is required in this House of Assembly.

I will say that, yes, I have spoken with the ministers across the country, all the Finance ministers across the country. I've spoken with the federal Finance minister as well and deputy prime minister about these very important issues. Of course, everyone is concerned across the country on cost of living and the cost of fuel. Everyone in the country is concerned about that.

I'd say everyone in the world, if you listen to the news coming out of the United States, Speaker.

But I will say that, yes, at the Council of the Federation table, the premiers across the country did petition the federal government on the carbon tax. It is a federal tax to address climate change and they declined to move on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we're into the month of May and few, if any, provincial road tenders are out. The minister allowed the last five-year road program to expire and promised a new plan last fall.

When are we going to see it?

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

E. LOVELESS: Over the next few days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: He almost eliminated the rest of my questions, but I'm going to keep going, because he promised this several weeks ago, it was imminent and contractors are still waiting, Mr. Speaker. I think this bears repeating.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I've not seen so few tenders out in the first week of May. Contractors are anxiously trying to plan their construction season. We're into May. While people on their crews are facing no income and employment insurance benefits are running out.

Again, how does the minister expect small businesses and families to survive when he can't get the tenders out to do the work?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A very important question, but there are tenders that have already gone out the door. We've consulted very closely with the NLCA, which is important communication. I've talked to contractors as well. At this moment, everybody seems to be pleased. When we roll out the roads plan, I'm sure people will be getting to work. There will be jobs in this province.

I say to the hon. Member, if you're going to ask me a question you need to listen because it's important. Jobs will be created when the standards come out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: – over the next coming weeks. We look forward to the work that's going to be done on our roads in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

He must be talking to the roads people up in Ontario, not the crowd around here, not the Newfoundland crowd we're talking to. They're pretty upset. Actually, they're reaching out to us. I'm not sure who he's talking to but they are talking to the right people. We can bring it up here in the House of Assembly and bring it up in the right venue.

Speaker, the minister has about an extra \$10 million this year and there's no shortage of need. Just ask the residents of the Baie Verte Peninsula, Terra Nova, Indian Meal Line and Route 60.

Again, companies are ready; workers are ready. Why are you not, Minister?

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

E. LOVELESS: I make no apologies for doing due diligence. The Member opposite knows the challenges and so does some of his caucus Members, because I've had a lot of conversations over there with their districts.

We have a challenge in Baie Verte, yes, we do. He didn't mention Route 360, which is my district as well. There's a challenge down there. There are challenges in many areas of the province. We have work that's required, but the need far exceeds what we have in terms of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

E. LOVELESS: So he stands in eagerness of hearing an answer but when he gets the answer that he don't want to hear, he doesn't listen to it.

We look forward to the roads plan. There will be roadwork done throughout the province, but we're doing due diligence because we want to be responsible with taxpayers' dollars.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I remind the minister that conversations and research isn't action. Action is needed on a lot of roads throughout the entire province, with the exception of the three previous ministers.

Speaker, the Minister of Health boasts about collaborative care. I have an individual who lives in Charlottetown in my district. His family physician was in Clarendville. Every specialist he's ever seen has been under Eastern Health. This individual has lost his family physician. He reached out to Eastern Health for a collaborative care clinic and he was told he could not access a

collaborative care clinic based on where he lived.

How does this make sense?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you for the question, Speaker.

Patient Connect NL is the registration portal. It's currently active for Eastern Health, and that is currently a geographically defined area. Patient Connect NL for Central and Western will be up and running within the next six to eight weeks. At that point, the gentleman can seek registration through there.

In terms of interim measures, 811 is available. There are nurse practitioners available for virtual consults. There are hubs in Gander, there are hubs in Grand Falls-Windsor and we will be working with Eastern Health to set up something similar in the way of collaborative team clinics in Clarendville.

More is coming, Mr. Speaker and there's money in the budget (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I'd encourage the minister to call 811 himself. I would also say this person, individual, has been under Eastern Health's care from the time he was born up until now, and now he's being denied access. It makes no sense whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I have countless seniors and professional drivers in my district who have contacted my office stating they cannot renew their driver's licence. There is no accessible transportation in my district. They cannot renew it because they cannot access a physician. They can't get it through 811 and they can't get it through a collaborative care clinic.

Mr. Speaker: How does the minister think that this is acceptable?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The agreement with the Medical Association and the physicians of this province relate solely to insured services that are covered by MCP. Drivers' medicals are not. The NLMA have never brought this up as becoming an insured service.

Certainly, the Member highlights an issue. We'd be happy to work with him and his constituents if he would provide us with details and we'll see what we can do to help them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the minister said in the media that equal pay legislation is not a silver bullet and referenced Ontario, who has already put the legislation in place, as having one of the largest gender gaps in the country. However, for every dollar earned by male counterparts, women in Ontario earn 89 cents. But here in our province, women only earn 66 cents on the man's dollar.

I ask the minister: What message does she think she's sending to women and gender-diverse groups in this province?

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the hon. Member and thank you for the attention on these topics. I would ask the Member to check her facts to see if those statistics are indeed accurate.

But I will say, I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't reflect upon the Member's statements yesterday, how I was very disheartened and disappointed to see her comments to denounce child care and the advancements that have been

made. What a slap in the face to women it certainly was.

She is completely out of line with her party because I know that the party she sits with has been a long-time advocate for accessible, affordable child care in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed good child care that is going to help get women back in to be competitive in the workforce, which is one of the barriers that we are taking down as a Liberal government here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I actually take offence to that.

I was pointing out the difference between child care for all families and single parents and, basically, equal pay so women don't, actually, earn 66 cents on the male dollar. Really, honestly, I take offence in what she is implying and basically is putting women against women. It's putting women against women and that's not my intent, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very serious issue that the whole province needs to actually stand up and say: women need to be treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, the government says they are paving the way for other provinces to take the lead in new initiative. Yet, currently, the only province in Atlantic Canada without pay legislation and currently has the largest gender gap in this country is our province.

So I ask the minister: Isn't 40 years long enough to close the wage gap?

Thank you.

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you and, again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the attention to the topic.

Again, it's going to take concrete steps – what we're seeing. This government invested \$750,000 not a year ago into Sandpiper Ventures, a capital venture that is strictly aimed – it is mandated to support women in the tech sector, the growing tech sector, I might add, here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, child care: this gets women back in – and the reason why we see such a large, wide gender wage gap is because women are the caregivers and we know that. Traditionally, since the world began, women are the ones who take care of children and take care of aging parents. So we need to do what we can to get people, to get women back in the workforce.

That is exactly what we are doing with the Premier's gender round table and, of course, every initiative that we are making we are committed to doing everything we can. Those conversations and that work is ongoing every day. I hope the Member can understand it and she is welcome to come over and join the conversation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've recently heard in the media the Privacy Commissioner talking about the fact that he's had to go to court to fight this government on the ability to be able to see information which, by all accounts, should be public information. The government is hiding behind client-solicitor privilege on everything.

I can remember being on this side of the House when Members over there were showing – as of Bill 29, blacked-out pieces of paper and so on. And now they're doing the exact same thing.

So I ask the government: Will you take the advice of the Privacy Commissioner and stop hiding behind client-solicitor privilege and make changes to legislation, if necessary, to eliminate that loophole that's currently being used by this government?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

As the Member points out, that matter was before the court and it continues to be before the court, as it is headed to the Court of Appeal in this province, so I won't comment any further on that, other than to say that the Trial Division decision did follow the precedent set by the Supreme Court of Canada. I respect the decision of the Trial Division and we will respect the decision of the Court of Appeal as well.

With regard to any issues ongoing with ATIPPA, we received, in the last several months, a report from former Chief Justice Orsborn to review the ATIPPA legislation. The Department of Justice and Public Safety is currently reviewing his recommendations, which includes recommendations on solicitor-client privilege. When that review is done we will bring any proposed amendments to the House of Assembly for discussion.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason why it's before the court is because this government brought it before the court. Prior to that, it was not an issue. So they've created the problem, now they're hiding behind what they created.

Mr. Speaker, I've had numerous people continue to reach out to me about provision of rapid antigen tests. Almost every province in the country are providing them free of charge to the general public, you can pick them up at public libraries or clinics or retail locations. Not so here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and citizens who are already stretched with the price of gas, the price of food, the price of home heat have an additional burden placed upon them to have to pay anywhere from \$15 to \$20 for a rapid antigen test. Many of these people want to do it because they obviously have

immunocompromised family members and so on that they want to protect.

I ask the government: Will they reverse this decision and make rapid antigen tests available to the general public?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

We have a very open policy for PCRs and rapid PCRs, and the flow chart on the website allows any individual who's concerned about their health to go through that. If they need a PCR – rapid or otherwise – it is available at no charge. There is no cost to the individual.

If someone doesn't need a test according to that flow chart, then it's not medically necessary in the views of Public Health and we do not provide it. If people choose to spend their money on rapid tests, that is an individual choice, over which we have no opinion one way or another.

We have a limited supply which we are using in guidance of Public Health and we continue to keep a small stockpile against the next wave.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Time for Question Period has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I will now rule on the point of privilege raised by the Member of Humber - Bay of Islands on May 2, 2022.

In Chapter 3 of Bosc and Gagnon, 3rd edition, it states that: "A complaint on a matter of privilege must satisfy two conditions before it can be accorded precedence over the Orders of the Day. First, the Speaker must be convinced that a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been made and, second, the matter must be raised at the earliest opportunity."

In reviewing this matter, I am satisfied that the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has met

the second condition noted above. That is, the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity.

The other condition outlined in the authorities is that the Speaker must be convinced that a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been made.

In *Parliamentary Immunity in Canada*, 2016, Joseph Maingot provides a practical definition of parliamentary privilege: “If someone improperly interferes with the parliamentary work of a Member of Parliament – i.e., any of the Member’s activities that have a connection with a proceeding in Parliament – that is a matter involving parliamentary privilege.”

In order for me to find that a prima facie, or on first impression, breach of the Member’s privileges, the Member must be clear as to how his privileges as a Member have been impacted; that is, how his work as a parliamentarian has been impeded.

I draw Members’ attention to Part II of the *House of Assembly Act*, which is the law passed in this Legislature to address issues around Member’s conflict of interest. The statute is very clear. All Members must file their financial disclosures and the Commissioner has the right and the responsibility under the law to request the information he deems necessary to assist Members in fulfilling their statutory duties. The Commissioner also has the legal authority to issue a report to this House where such information is not received.

The Commissioner has issued such a report under the authority of the *House of Assembly Act* and it is this report that is the subject of the Member’s point of privilege.

The Commissioner has a duty and responsibility given to him by the Legislature under the duly enacted law. He has issued reports regarding compliance of the Member with statutory requirements. In his point of privilege, the Member argues that the report impacts his reputation. However, any impact on the reputation of a Member further to such a report may be a consequence of the operation of the law itself. It is not a breach of that Member’s parliamentary privileges.

I note that the tabling of this report triggers a requirement by the House to deal with this in a prescribed time frame. In light of that, I feel it is incumbent on me to clarify three misleading comments made by the Member in his point of privilege.

One, in his argument, the Member cites the Conflict of Interest Act. This is incorrect. The applicable legislation is the Part II of the *House of Assembly Act*. I note that the relevant provisions of the act are outlined in the Commissioner’s report and they include definitions that are somewhat different from those cited in the Member’s point of privilege.

Secondly, the Member stated that, “I must remind the Members of this House of Assembly that the findings of the *Joyce Report* of 2018 were proven false by a Supreme Court decision.” This is also false. Out of respect and in deference to the court, I must clarify that there has been no Supreme Court decision regarding *The Joyce Report* of 2018.

In the point of privilege, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands discusses personal financial information and references a private interest in a company. I would like to bring to the attention of Members that no such reference was made by the Commissioner. Further, the Commissioner’s report does not disclose the Member’s personal financial information.

Conflict of interest is a serious matter, particularly for elected officials. The statutory financial disclosure requirements of the *House of Assembly Act* are fundamental to the conflict of interest analysis that this House, by law, we asked the Commissioner to complete this report. All Members, including myself, are familiar with and must abide by these requirements. They are intended to provide the public with confidence in us as elected officials and to protect the integrity of our political system. A report respecting the compliance of a Member with these requirements does not, in and of itself, breach the privilege of that Member.

Therefore, I rule that there is no prima facie point of privilege.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I give notice on tomorrow I will move the following motion:

THAT this House concur in the report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards entitled the *Joyce Report, April 12, 2022*;

AND THAT the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands is directed to submit the required information to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards within seven business days of the adoption of this resolution;

AND THAT should the information not be submitted, in accordance with paragraph 45(1)(c) of the *House of Assembly Act*, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands be suspended from the House of Assembly;

AND THAT the said suspension be without pay and shall continue until such a time that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards advises the Speaker that the statutory obligations referenced in the report have been met.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The reason for the petition, again, is to increase the support for Labrador West seniors.

Reasons for the petition:

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

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

WHEREAS the means for the increased number of seniors in Labrador West to happily age in place are currently not available in the region.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. BROWN: Once again I bring this petition to the House on behalf of the seniors and the residents of Labrador West. Those who have signed it actually have said to me one day I'll be a senior in Labrador West. So once again we're asking that the residents of Labrador West, their concerns around seniors' care, housing and that be addressed in a timely fashion.

These people built Labrador West. They continue to live there. They have their families there. They have their lives there. It's just a cruel thing to think about that some of the people, in the back of their mind, are going: At some point I'm going to have to leave this region, be away from my children, my grandchildren, their

friends and the community that they helped build.

It's not just the next community over like you'd find somewhere on the Island where you're 10 minutes away, five minutes away, so on and so forth. This is hours upon hours away if you're driving. In some cases, it's thousands and thousands of dollars for airline tickets if the grandkids want to go see Nan and Pop.

So this is the thing that we're facing in Labrador West is the lack of care. Home care is basically non-existent, we do not have a personal care home and what we have in long-term care right now is very insufficient of the currently growing need.

There was a report done in the early 2000s that talked about there was going to be an explosion of seniors in Labrador West, and the report was absolutely correct. We have a massive amount of senior population in the region, and they don't want to go. They don't want to be forced out of their homes, out of their community, because of something that every other place in this province gets to enjoy the fact that many other regions have the ability for personal care homes, care attendants and all that.

So this is what we're asking for now, to be treated fairly and equitably among that.

Thank you, Speaker, for this.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The residents of South West Arm are troubled with the unsafe conditions of the road and lack of maintenance to the roads that are maintained by Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

are safe for travel by all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, South West Arm is a pretty important part of my district. It's made up of multiple communities. When you drive down that highway, you quickly see how unsafe it's become. I say tongue-in-cheek, but it's a very true story that the guardrails are asleep. There's no way that it could be anything else because, obviously, Transportation and Infrastructure would have removed them, if they had just fallen over. They must be just laid down sleeping. Because they're all lying down. And it's extremely dangerous conditions.

You're talking about some of the sharpest turns – literally, a hairpin turn they call the S turn – and the guardrails are falling down. And they've been that way for four years. There has been multiple pictures sent; the road is in massive disrepair, potholes. What's most troubling to me is that we've gotten to a point where we have fish trucks that refuse to go down over the road to collect fish.

Now, millions and millions of dollars worth of business happens down there, and the fish trucks will not go collect the fish. You've got to think about that. How can we just allow that to happen? I mean, it's an entire region of the province. On top of that we have a school down there, Southwest Arm Academy. Partway up the road to South West Arm, students go to Clarenville and then the rest of them go down to Southwest Arm Academy. The kids that go to Clarenville, they miss about half as much school as Southwest Arm Academy.

That's because the roads are not maintained. Now, I've had a conversation with the minister and he knows full well we have staff from Transportation and Infrastructure that have reached out to my office and told me their concerns with the road, the lack of maintenance, the type of sand that's used for winter maintenance, but it's more about the potholes and what they could do. The other thing is that we have individuals who work with the department who drive that road every single day to and from work. They understand the issues; they've highlighted the issues. The department is doing nothing about them.

So we have a Department of Transportation and Infrastructure truck that drives from the end of South West Arm to the depot and back on a daily basis, every single day. So it's impossible for me to believe that Transportation and Infrastructure doesn't understand these problems. Plus, my office has sent hundreds of pictures, videos and all kinds of drone footage to get this fixed. Not a response; it stays the same. Signage is falling over, but what's most troubling is how dangerous this road is. It should not take somebody getting incredibly hurt or killed in order for this to get fixed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The safety of 400-plus workers at the OCI plant in Bonavista who cross the poorly marked crosswalk on Campbell Street in Bonavista, a minimum of four times a day, is a major safety concern. Adding to this issue are the poor sightlines for drivers when approaching the crosswalk. Many thousands of tourists as well travel this street during plant production season, with the vast majority of whom are unaware of the area's safety risk.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately address the safety concern at this crosswalk by erecting amber lighting and, thus, creating a safer environment for the workers crossing this busy street.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, there are many demands on TI for safety issues on our roadwork. We have 400-plus employees, 65 of which are senior citizens, who work at OCI. Four times a day they cross the plant to get to their parking lot, back and forth. Sometimes we default that when we look at the Janeway and compare it to the Miller Centre, we see that there's quite a dichotomy of facility and services sometimes that's provided in those two elements.

I would say we have a safety issue of which pertains to a senior population that we have in Bonavista. The sightlines on this street are very poor. If you ever travel to historic Bonavista, you know that many tourists travel there for the first time and many would be passing through Campbell Street to head to Church Street in the heart of town. The sightlines aren't great. The paint we use on our crosswalks doesn't last. I'm not sure, if I speculated, lasting two weeks, but they certainly don't last a season and sometimes they're not painted until the end of the tourism season.

Amber lighting – I would like for the TI officials to have a look at this particular crosswalk, have a look at the crosswalk, do an analysis of it and then see what the safety issue would be while the plant is in production. Because our goal would be to make sure that people remain safe, those that are driving the economy in the District of Bonavista, and I think the amber lighting will certainly help improve the safety of those at the OCI plant in Bonavista.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure. Whereas many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work as well as commercial, residential and tourism growth in our region has increased the volume of traffic on this highway.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway.

Speaker, I have mentioned this many times, as you know, in the House bringing up Witless Bay Line and the conditions of the roads. This time of the year we have crab trucks that are transporting crab from the Southern Shore – right from Petty Harbour, right to Trepassey, St.

Shott's area that they drive across Witless Bay Line. It's a shorter distance for them when they are leaving these fishing ports. It's critical that they have some good infrastructure to go on.

I mean, you drive these roads and it's incredible how bad they are. I think one of the first times that the survey for the conditions of the roads in Atlantic Canada, when it first came out, I am going to say the first time it happened, the Witless Bay Line was on the top 10 list. So it was an original list that eventually started. It was one of the first roads that were on it from Newfoundland and Labrador and it hasn't changed since then. We've done a couple of kilometres in there – four kilometres – and there's more work needs to be done.

We have people that use it for towing trailers and campers across the Witless Bay Line and they decide to go out around, go out through the Goulds, go out the Goulds Bypass, come in the Trans-Canada rather than go across the Witless Bay Line. So there is something that should be looked at.

I know that they are in there putting some cold patch down, but it's only a temporary fix. Then the winter comes and the plows hit it and all of a sudden all the cold patch is gone again. So it's something that I would love for the minister – hopefully it's in his budget this year – to be able to do something with the roads in the district.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Local Service District of West Bay and the Town of Lourdes have an agreement in place for the extension of water services to West Bay. They applied for funding through the Canada Community-Building Fund but when the water service was tested, it didn't meet the federal standard resulting in the rejection of the application. The water service does meet the provincial standard and the communities still

agree in principle on extending the water supply into West Bay, pending funding.

Therefore we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to secure funding through the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water for the residents of West Bay.

Speaker, one of the principles of the Health Accord talks about the social determinants of health. One of the social determinants of health is clean drinking water. Unfortunately, the community of West Bay has no drinking water. In 2022, the Local Service District of West Bay has access to no drinking water. They do not have a water system.

The Town of Lourdes has a system that was designed with enough capacity to take on the community of West Bay. They have an agreement in place to make that happen. What they need is the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide the funding necessary for this to take place.

Every summer, they wind up carrying water from household to household just to do the basic necessities of life. There's a real opportunity here, when we talk about regionalization and moving forward for two communities who have an opportunity to share a water system, to make that happen.

I urge government, whether it's Municipal Affairs, whether it's Transportation and Infrastructure, to make this happen. Let's fund the water system, the extension, so that the people of West Bay can have access to clean drinking water.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, first reading of Bill 55.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Life Insurance Act, Bill 55, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Life Insurance Act, Bill 55, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Life Insurance Act," carried. (Bill 55)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Life Insurance Act. (Bill 55)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 55 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominiums Act, 2009, Bill 56, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominiums Act, 2009, Bill 56, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Condominiums Act, 2009," carried. (Bill 56)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Condominiums Act, 2009. (Bill 56)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 56 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Urban And Rural Planning Act, 2000, Bill 58, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Urban And Rural Planning Act, 2000, Bill 58, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Urban And Rural Planning Act, 2000," carried. (Bill 58)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Urban And Rural Planning Act, 2000. (Bill 58)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 58 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m., today, Tuesday, May 3.

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.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I move, notwithstanding Standing Order 9, that this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 4, 2022, but shall continue to sit for to conduct Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have, I think, four minutes left over from yesterday that I didn't get to use.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing I just want to say is I just got a message here from a constituent. This is just information for the House and the minister responsible for Tourism, I guess, about this Turo, which is being promoted. It's the Turo program. I've had someone reach out to me who said that they went to their insurance company about having their car as part of this Turo program and they've been told by their insurance company that they could end up with their car insurance cancelled.

I'm not sure if the minister and the government is aware of this issue. He is suggesting that there may be some kind of an amendment or something required to some regulations to allow this to happen, perhaps, or maybe it's just not going to happen. But I know that the government has been, I believe – the minister has been and others – promoting this idea and so on. While it may have seemed like a good thing, apparently there's a significant challenge. So nobody is going to put their car forward for tourists, if they're going to get their insurance cancelled as a result. I thought I would just put it out there for the information of the House in case they weren't aware.

Obviously, I only have a couple of minutes left here so I'll just go back to where I was my first time I spoke and it kind of ties into the emergency debate that my colleagues in the Official Opposition put forward, the motion for yesterday, and certainly it has dominated Question Period.

Just to add my voice on behalf of people I represent, Mr. Speaker, there are two things I have been bombarded with: issues around health care, family doctors, collaborative clinics and I could go on and on and on about that one, perhaps I will have another opportunity, but the other thing is the cost of living. Government keeps going back to the five-point plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of conversation is too loud.

P. LANE: And just to, I suppose, add the voice of my constituents, not just me and my personal opinion but people who I represent. I am getting the calls and the messages, as are all Members, and government needs to realize that the five-point plan helped some people: people at the very, very lowest end.

Again, if you are a senior citizen, as an example, who worked your whole life, maybe you have a few RRSPs, maybe you have a small pension or something, you got nothing. There's nothing in it, like zero, zilch. If you are somebody who is working at a minimum wage job or a little better than a minimum wage job and you're barely

struggling to survive: you got nothing. A lot of people – this house insurance, they don't own a house. They don't have tenant insurance. It's doing absolutely nothing for the average working person.

That is what, I believe, my colleagues over here, all around me, have been saying over and over again. I'm sure we understand it. I understand that we're strapped financially, I get it, but it is one thing to try to get the province on an even keel and there is another thing about having to care for the people that are living in this province. People are really struggling to survive, they really are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't hear the Member speak.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the protection.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about these issues and we look at the soaring price at the pumps. I mean, my God, we're well over \$2 a litre at the pumps. Whoever thought that would happen? The cost of home heating fuel, the price of groceries, people are really, really struggling. Particularly the people who are not at the very bottom, who receive some help, but that group that are just above. We need to do more for them. It hasn't been done in this budget, and I encourage the government to please do so.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to, in my next 20 minutes – when the 20 minutes shows up on the clock; there we go – speak about connecting this province. I've talked about some of these issues before, but I thought I would try to tie a variety of themes that are very important to the District of Lake Melville –

and my 20 seconds are almost up but thank you to my colleague.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. TRIMPER: There we go; we'll get there. I remember the Leader of the Official Opposition did this one time; I watched him do it.

Anyway, thank you very much. I want to talk about connecting the province and some priorities, some things that we're making progress on. There is, of course, with such a huge piece of geography, so much need.

I want to talk about a little trip I just did. I left my district a little while ago. There I am in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and, of course, to get to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, while I didn't start in the Torngat Mountains, I need to speak about the importance of proceeding with this North Coast highway. Whether we call it a prefeasibility study or a feasibility study, we need to recognize that the people of Torngat Mountains are looking for a connection to this province.

So much that we're dealing with in this budget debate is about the cost of travel, to get folks from the North Coast out to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, which is the hub for Labrador, and on into larger centres. Most of the time this is by air and the challenge that we have in doing that, and how important a road access would be.

It's interesting my colleague from Torngat Mountains; we actually worked together some 11 years ago, over the span of some two years on that very project. This was a private sector initiative. It was a company she was working for; I was working as a consultant. We know the route. We know so many of the issues. It's actually very straightforward between Happy Valley-Goose Bay, North West River and on into Postville and Makkovik. This phase, there's no reason why we can't get started at it, and I can tell you a lot of the work already exists.

Back to my drive; the other day, my wife, my wonderful dog Cracker and I, we jumped in the vehicle and we started driving out from Happy Valley-Goose Bay. For those of you who know the route, once you leave Happy Valley-Goose Bay, it is 410 kilometres before you see any kind

of service; whether it be a washroom, telephone service that you can count on, maybe some other kind of emergency support.

I ask you, where else in the province might you go, venturing down a little road, for 410 kilometres? Just imagine you leave from here and you go well to the other side, probably to my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, I think 410 kilometres might get you out there somewhere. So just imagine covering that entire distance with no support if in the event something happens. And we're talking some pretty heavy-duty country and absolutely no opportunity for support.

We still need to think about it. I've been advocating for, I call them pit stops, emergency support, communications, maybe even just a little bit of food, and, by the way, a washroom. What the heck is wrong with having a washroom somewhere along on that highway? That was obstacle number one.

By the way, we went a day earlier because – and this was just weeks ago – of the snowstorm coming the following day actually was of sufficient size and configuration that it again shut down the highway in the vicinity of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair District from Lodge Bay I think to Red Bay. That road was again closed. I was looking at images on her phone this morning. It's still dealing with severe snowbanks. That's challenge number two.

We then camped out in Forteau, along with some other folks who were waiting for five days before they could cross the Strait of Belle Isle. The reason why we couldn't get across is because the ice concentration, pressure, configuration has been so extreme this year that even with the escort of an icebreaker, it was an amazing experience.

Now, we're not talking the heavy sea ice that we see in Northern Labrador, but it was of sufficient strength and concentration. And if anyone follows me on Facebook, you can see that our ferry stopped several times and the icebreaker had to come around. As I posted there and as I'll say in this hon. House, it is really time to get serious about looking at an underground tunnel to connect the two chunks of geography that are our province. I can just imagine the economic

boost that would occur. There's so much financial argument to proceeding with that, and I can tell you from the perspective of somebody who travels that route often, it would pay dividends in terms of so much other support for this province.

We crossed over, landed in St. Barbe, and then I was actually making my way down to see relatives in Nova Scotia. We started driving down along the Southwest Coast of Newfoundland and we were stopped again for a day because of the extreme winds. Now, the infrastructure is there and I'm not sure what we do with 140-kilometre-an-hour winds, but suffice to say there was a tractor-trailer overturned that was a solid reflection of the strength of the winds and the conditions.

We live in a heck of province and there's no question we are being challenged by the changes that we're feeling in our climate, by the existing conditions and logistics and so on. So all I'm saying to government is really we need some vision, we need to look forward, and we really need to start thinking about some investment now and how much that could save us over the long run.

Some of the other issues that relate to this and just a little while ago in the House – it's a bit abstract, and frankly I don't think it's going to cost a little money, but I wanted to raise it again because there was interesting feedback that I received, and it's this idea of how we communicate in terms of when we are communicating.

Labrador, for example, functions with two time zones. That's not counting the confusion that we have, especially down the southwest part of Labrador, down in Blanc-Sablon area, which is in another time zone, and then I look to my colleague from Labrador West who also deals with the Quebec zone. There's not much we can do about that, but could we at least consider putting all of Labrador in one time zone? Next, could we consider moving everybody to standard time?

Stop the shift from this twice a year jolt of jet lag that I think most of the province feels, as we adjust to that hour difference, stay on the same time throughout the year. Yeah, there are going

to be some adjustments, particularly in the morning and in the evening. I believe we'll get used to it, and I note that the United States are certainly looking like they're moving in that direction. I suggest that we pay close attention.

Finally, I'm just going to throw it out there. It's certainly not a sword to die on, but I think it's one that we could consider. If you again watch me on all kinds of communications and meetings, all of us receive notices that there's going to be a particular briefing at 2 NL time tomorrow. I still wonder what NL time is. Are we talking Newfoundland time? I'm sure they're not talking Labrador time, but again, it's that confusion and how many missed appointments, missed flights and so on. So these are some of the things about connecting our province together.

Another aspect that I speak often of and I just want to mention it again. I share with the minister – I was here last evening at Estimates. We talked about the Medical Transportation Assistance Program and how vital it is, particularly for districts in Labrador, but also in rural parts of Newfoundland. If you don't have insurance coverage to get you to the health care that we are obligated, that we are proud of in this country to be able to provide, this is a real burden. It's not just a financial burden; it's a health burden. I'm very sorry to say it's caused and led to mortality.

I know of people who have cancelled appointments for such serious situations as cancer, perhaps cardiac attention and so on. They just can't even afford the difference in what we pay them. I look forward to whatever we see from the implementation plan of the Health Accord. Many of us have a lot of confidence in the co-chairs. I do believe they are listening. I do believe this may just be a report that never sees any dust. I do hope it's truly an accord that we can all work with and agree to. It's not going to change things overnight, but I believe there is so much that's critically urgent right now, that I look forward to seeing it roll out.

Air ambulance is one. I was just dealing with a very challenging situation for the last five days with a gentleman out of Churchill Falls, and I'd like to thank all those that participated. If I had

to list the number of departments that were involved, I was thinking – and organizations – probably four or five that were required to get this one individual out. Not necessarily a medical emergency but it was one that we required medical assistance for. I'd like to thank and acknowledge everyone who was involved. You know who you are.

One issue that I think all of us as MHAs recognize and realize is the importance of sport. I'm hearing it in government and I welcome that and some support in terms of recognizing the cost of recreational pursuits and so on. But, as we know, it's the next generations, those that are in school, who so embrace, thrive and, let's face it, get them on a really good road for a healthy life, by getting involved in sports, particularly in high schools.

In Labrador, I can tell you, we are constantly running into problems that seem to be increasing. Once things settle down for me this week, I know I have to get back to some folks in the Lake Melville District who have come to me very concerned because, again, they can't afford to take teams – and these are teams with athletes with high skills – that are trying to get out to Newfoundland for competition and they can't afford it.

The subsidy is wholly insufficient and it's causing – well, it's preventing any opportunity. I note – and I don't want to throw it out as an attack or a criticism, it's a reality – we have the concentration of our population, we're only 6 per cent of this provincial population in Labrador, we get that, we understand that. So more on occasion, we probably have folks representing Labrador schools and communities who are going to travel to the Island for competitions.

But I can tell you there's a general reluctance for those teams to come to Labrador. We'd love to see you. But it's increasingly more of a trend in terms of teams or events, or even sport associations, and I can name a couple of them, who have declared that they will no longer host and hold provincial competitions in Labrador because of the expense of travelling there. Well, they recognize it, and I can tell you we deal with it every day.

Again, these are all important points about how we can try to pull this province together, and it's incredibly frustrating.

I'm thinking that if the Health Accord can really do what it is intended with its implementation document, so much of this is going to be about, as I say, pulling us together, but also recognizing that it should not be an extreme disadvantage to live in any part of this province. I often hear people say things like, well, you choose to live there, whether it be in Lake Melville or even the more isolated communities of the North Coast in Torngat Mountains.

Well, guess what? People who are in these communities – I look to my colleague from Lab West – we, collectively as a community, are heavily involved in very important, lucrative economic drivers for this province. And as we are so often arguing – the three of us sitting here on this side of the House – for greater attention because it is those same people that are running the Voisey's Bay project, the iron ore mines of Labrador West, the Muskrat Falls Project, if and when it gets up and running, will be very important in terms of providing electricity for so much of Newfoundland and so many other aspects of our economy.

We need to recognize that if we are going to develop these resources, and develop them wisely, we need people who are going to live adjacent to those areas. And all we are asking for is some adjacency consideration for people to feel proud about where they live, not to feel that they need to be propped up. I think, frankly, we can get there but it is going to be all about good communication.

With that, Speaker, I think I am going to stop on that point. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about how we can tie our province together.

Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am going to have a few words before I won't be able to. I know a lot of people would like for me to stop bringing up issues concerning the

Humber - Bay of Islands and Corner Brook but that isn't going to happen.

So I just want to stand up, Mr. Speaker, and speak on the issues I have been speaking about for a while: cataract surgery. We see the backlog again, the number of people backlogged, and why this government and the Minister of Health and Community Services will not allow to free up time at the hospital and now have to force them to go to Stephenville even though the equipment is not up to standard.

I received another letter from the Minister of Health and Community Services talking about the report. There is a report that was done up, and this is the cuteness of it. The report was done up and you're talking about how much it costs per surgery. The report that the minister referred to in the letter, it said it was something like \$540. I haven't got the letter right here in front of me but it was something like \$500 or \$560, not the \$1,160 or \$1,260 that was reported.

But here is the detail that was left out, that is concerning one eye. Most cataracts are done with two eyes. So when you add that price together, it is the price that is in the report. So to put it into a letter that here is the actual cost to have these surgeries done at a public facility is half what it costs, when you know there needs to be two eyes. That is the kind of stuff.

I know the Member for St. George's - Humber is listening, call some of your constituents, call the Apex building and see what I am saying, if it's not correct. I know the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay did and I know he knows what I am saying is correct. Phone the Apex building and get the same information.

So when the Minister of Health and Community Services puts in a letter, trying to say that here's the report that was done and here's what it costs to do it in a public, and knowing that's only for one eye and there's always two eyes that are going to be done when doing cataracts, is just wrong.

There are 800 seniors on the West Coast now; they're going to start surgeries in Stephenville now. You should ask have they got the full equipment. You should go out and ask. I'll

guarantee you that you will stand up and say this is wrong. Ask them do they have the full packs to complete the eye surgery. Ask them.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Ask them what?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: I can't hear you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Ask them why they didn't have it.

E. JOYCE: Why they didn't have it? Is because the machine is outdated and the reason why the machine is outdated – and now the packs that they made for the outdated machine at the Sir Thomas Riddick Hospital, they don't make the packs anymore. They are actually gone off to try to get more packs. So what they have to do is take half of one pack and half of another pack, throw half out of this pack, half out of the other pack, to make one full pack. I say to the Member: If you want a number, I'll give you the number to confirm everything I am saying here.

For this government to talk about here is the amount of money that we got and here is where we're going to take care – and there are 800 seniors that could be done, their eyes. This is why I cannot vote for this budget. I just can't vote for it. On my conscience, I can't vote for it.

Time after time after time I have brought this up. I gave them options. I asked the Premier to call, the Premier never called. The information that is put out there using a letter, doing one eye instead of two and saying here is what it costs at a public facility when the report is there. I can even try to track down a copy of the report. It's over \$1,100 with the lens now being including, because before you had to pay for the lens. Now, with the lens, it's over \$1,200. And to put in a letter it's only \$560 or \$570, it's just wrong. Just making false excuses to deny seniors their eyesight.

I can't comprehend it, the reason why. The only reason why: a personality conflict right there. I heard the Minister of Health and Community Services go out and talk and say they could do it at the hospital in Corner Brook. As I mentioned before, there are two days at the hospital in Corner Brook. There is one person who does glaucoma for the whole Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – the whole province.

Anything I'm saying, the minister could stand up and I'll even give him my time. The whole Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – now, what they're saying is that, okay, start cancelling the glaucoma across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, start cancelling it and start doing cataract surgery so you could get your wait-list down. And glaucoma is much more serious than cataracts. That's what the minister is saying: Cancel it.

And the other one is retina in the hospital, because at the Apex building they don't have the ability to do retina or glaucoma – they could, if they were allowed, but they're not even allowed. They can get the equipment, but they're not allowed to do it and they don't have the equipment, so it has to be done at the hospital.

So what the minister is saying and this government is saying to people of this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with your eye surgery: Cancel glaucoma, start doing cataracts to knock down your wait-list. Go to Stephenville where the equipment is outdated. They don't even have the packs for the equipment; they have to substitute stuff in and out. Let the people now start right from Baie Verte, starts out, right on until Corner Brook, start going to Stephenville. Corner Brook residents, start driving to Stephenville.

I have had numerous calls from the Premier's own district and he won't even stand up for them. It is sad. It is actually sad that here is the Premier of this province, a doctor himself – I'm not disputing any work he ever did and all his volunteer work; I'm not disputing that – but when you get in government, all of a sudden, whatever happens to many people in government is that they change. They change. And you know that, Mr. Speaker; you're aware of that. You've seen that, haven't you, how

people change? Yeah, you have. People change. People change when they're in government because they need this great position, they have to get up in this position or we have to stand up and defend something.

But for the Premier of the province who's a doctor himself, he has all the information that these cataract surgeries can be done – the cost at a public facility versus at the Apex facility is much cheaper. The cost to actually do the surgery is the same no matter where it's at, but the actual cost to perform the surgeries is much lower. There's a wait-list of 800 seniors that they can start and do it much more efficient.

So I'll say to the Member for Baie Verte - White Bay, sorry.

AN HON. MEMBER: Green Bay.

E. JOYCE: Green Bay, sorry. All I remember is Springdale over so many years. We go back a long ways. All I can remember is Springdale with the Member and I spent a lot of time in Baie Verte over the years. He's over there waving to me and saying what a great soccer team we had, the Curling Rangers.

But, Mr. Speaker, on a serious note, I just want to let you know, right now you may get calls from people – I don't know who's on the wait-list; I really don't. I just know the numbers. You may start getting calls now that people can't come to Corner Brook; they have to go on to Stephenville to get the cataracts. It won't be done in the Apex building because not allowed.

Go to Stephenville, it costs you more. It costs you more in travel. People from Humber Valley, the Premier's own district now, have to bypass Corner Brook, go on to Stephenville – that's only when they can do it, by the way. This is the big thing with the Apex building. If they want to work weekends on their own and call the staff in, they can work weekends. If they want to work nights, they can work nights. They can work whenever they want, but at the hospital it's a set time on a set day; Stephenville, the same thing. They can't work past a day or two in Stephenville because then they have to start calling people in. If you are working at the Apex building, your own building, where you have

your own staff, you can work weekends, nights, to clear up the backlog.

The minister knows. The minister is well aware of this here. This is how you create the backlog by saying okay, we can only do it a day a week at the hospital. That creates the backlog. But if you get rid of that backlog and then go with the quota that's given out by the Health and Community Services, you would never have a backlog because you have a certain number that you have to get done.

Can you imagine? It's mind-boggling when you dig into it. It's mind-boggling. If any of us here in this room right now had a broken leg or a broken arm, as quick as we can get in, we get it done. Anybody here, quick as we can get in, we can get done. If you got cataract surgery, there's a quota. You will not go past the quota. There's a wait-list right now of 800 – I don't know if they started in Stephenville yet. Come April 1, you have a quota. I don't know what it is, 1,700, 1,800, whatever it is. You have the quota for Western Newfoundland, excluding St. Anthony.

So once that quota is done, if there's a list – the backlog – you can't fulfill the backlog. If it is leg, arms, anything else, you can do it. But cataracts, they won't. I even wrote the minister and brought this up, but guess what? Still the big backlog. If you had a leg, an arm, it's no problem.

And the other thing I brought up on numerous occasions, Mr. Speaker, is the laundry services for the new acute care hospital in Corner Brook. It's gone; taken out. I wrote the minister and asked him. He said: Yeah, well, in July, two ministers got together in consultation. I said: What two ministers? I wasn't there. Oh, it was consultations in between. I said: No, because I was in there. Here's the speech you gave in Corner Brook. Ah well, in collaboration it cost \$100,000 per square foot; we can't afford it. Why didn't you tell the people that? The election –

AN HON. MEMBER: I think the Member for Corner Brook was campaigning on it.

E. JOYCE: Campaigning on it.

The election in 2021, in January and February 2021, they were out saying the laundry was in, during the election in Corner Brook and Humber - Bay of Islands and the West Coast. And that affects four of our districts. I have the print of it, during the election.

The actual RFP closed January 24, 2021. They knew, but out campaigning, saying how dare someone say the laundry is not included in the new acute care hospital. How dare –?

P. LANE: Who said that?

E. JOYCE: The Premier himself was out saying it.

P. LANE: Go away. Who else?

E. JOYCE: The Member for Corner Brook was out saying it.

If you're going to do it, do it. At least have the honesty to tell people you're going to do it, that you did it. Don't be out campaigning during election because the election was prolonged, and saying, oh no, it's in, it's in, when the RFP closed January 24. The laundry's 75 jobs gone. But if you're going to move it out, at least have the honesty to go and tell the people. That was a commitment that the Liberal government, which I was a part of, made that all the services within the Western Memorial Hospital would be in an acute-care hospital.

That was a commitment. We made that commitment to the unions. I walked out on the steps there on the Confederation Building and 500 or 600 – and I made that commitment on behalf of the government. We lived up to that commitment until we found out, by luck, that it was taken out, that is was actually taken out.

So if anything I am saying here – if someone wants to dispute it, stand up and I'll show you documentation about the RFP. I'll show you the statements that were made in Corner Brook during the election. This was the kind of stuff – when I hear things about cataract surgery, when I hear information about cataract surgery, I have got to go check because I can assure you, there's a different side of it.

And this is why I'm going to find it so hard to vote – I won't vote for the budget, on principle alone, when I know there are 800 seniors that can be done like that – start today. Let's do it in the Apex building. I don't care who gets paid. I'm not worried about personalities. I just want those seniors – I cannot vote for the budget, just on principle. Some of those seniors that we're talking about today lost their licence, can't drive; in their house and can't get out. Many of them cannot even read their medication and here we are standing in this House talking about the great deficit we've got.

Here's the issue with it: It don't cost any money. If you went into the Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital and opened up that building seven days a week and you paid to do the surgery, you're going to get paid. They're going to hire the staff, the nurses, all the people in the OR, all the check-in people, they're all going to have all that, the surgeons are going to get paid. If they did it in the Apex building, they're going to get paid a lesser amount for the building, but the money is there.

There is no money; it's not costing no money. It's just the personalities – just personalities. It boggles my mind about why this is not done. This is an easy fix; a very easy fix but it won't be done. And as long as I get the opportunity to speak on this here, I will.

Also about the nurse practitioners: a great opportunity in Corner Brook. I heard the minister when I asked the question about the nurse practitioner. He said we're meeting with the union, the Nurses' Union. Meet with the nurse practitioners; meet with their association. That's who you need to work with. Don't go standing up and saying you're going to work with the nurses. Go and meet the nurse practitioners who can help this out in Corner Brook.

There are thousands of people in Western Newfoundland now, people waiting six, seven, eight hours in the emergency room. Nurse practitioners could help out so easy. So instead of standing up and saying: oh, we're going to discuss this with the nurses. Go and meet with the nurse practitioners association. There are three set up in Corner Brook now. The last count I heard they had over 4,000 people going

through the doors, paying out of their own pocket.

AN HON. MEMBER: Thirty-five bucks a shot.

E. JOYCE: How much?

AN HON. MEMBER: Thirty-five.

E. JOYCE: Thirty-five bucks a shot, paid out of their own pocket.

That's how many that Lawrence passed on to someone to pass on to me, how many people they've seen and they are only opened up two or three months ago – 4,000. That is probably higher now. I mean, that's a lot of people in Western Newfoundland. That's a lot of people.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to bring up the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a second. I spoke to him, probably three weeks ago about an issue out in Copper Mine Brook about the gabion baskets. I got to say that the gabion baskets were done soon after because it was a treacherous situation. I just want to recognize that, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure did that.

The Copper Mine Brook area where – I just wanted the people to listen from Lark Harbour because the word will spread that I went over yesterday to speak to the minister about Copper Mine Brook and the drop in the road and he had it on his desk, the letter that I wrote him, he was reviewing that.

I just want to let people know that the serious concern of the Copper Mine Brook and the gabion baskets, when I brought it to the minister, he addressed it. And, yesterday, when I went over to discuss about the letter I write, he had it on his desk reading the letter. I just want to recognize that and let people know that the minister is aware of it and hopefully where it is so bad, it is very dangerous, that something will be done. Thank you, Minister, for the safety of that area.

Mr. Speaker, I only have another two minutes left and I am going to speak on the helmets again on Side By Sides. I have to speak on that.

I can tell you, the minister never came out and said: we're not putting it in. But when I left this House and the reason why I voted for it, I had firm belief that it was going to be done.

AN HON. MEMBER: We all did.

E. JOYCE: The minister did not come out and say it's going to be done, but when you say: I understand, I got it, let me put it in the regulations, seriously considering it. It is going to come out in the regulations.

S. STOODLEY: Any day now.

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

S. STOODLEY: Any day now.

E. JOYCE: Any day now you're going to change it?

S. STOODLEY: No, the regulations will be out.

E. JOYCE: Oh, that is a nice flippant answer to the people who are going to be out: any day. Why don't you go out and meet with the residents? How many people wrote you?

S. STOODLEY: I gave you my cellphone number.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: My God, relax, relax.

Why don't you go out and meet with the people who want you to meet with them?

S. STOODLEY: I gave you my cellphone number.

E. JOYCE: Why don't you go out and meet with the people?

S. STOODLEY: I gave you my cellphone number.

E. JOYCE: Why don't you go out and meet with the residents?

S. STOODLEY: I gave them my cellphone number.

E. JOYCE: Oh, yeah, gave your cellphone number.

There are people asking for a public meeting with the Premier and the minister, and refusing a public meeting – unheard of. I even wrote you and asked you on behalf of – Brad Gallant wrote you and asked you for a public meeting. What did you say? Got to go through your MHA.

So will you commit to a public meeting on the West Coast now? Would you commit to a public meeting?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

E. JOYCE: When you won't commit to a public meeting to justify a decision that you made, you don't feel strong enough in your own position. That's my personal view.

Brad Gallant is waiting for your response for a public meeting.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to briefly speak on the budget. For me, Speaker, sometimes I do struggle to, not find things to talk about, not issues to bring forward from my district, sometimes I struggle because there are so many issues for my district. I look around the province and I actually ask myself: How did we get here?

It's pretty obvious here that there's very little consideration given to people in rural, remote areas, especially in Northern Labrador. I was going to present a petition again today but I didn't get a chance. It seems like all my petitions are about serious needs that existed over the

many decades, the many generations since we joined Confederation.

As the MHA for Torngat Mountains, six communities in Northern Labrador, each one of them are recognized as Indigenous communities. It's really hard.

It's kind of strange, too, I just started talking and now the banter is starting to pick up again.

But why do I have to put petitions in place? Like, for example, the petition I was going to present today was on marine shipping. I wasn't going to ask for something new. I was going to ask for the marine shipping to be reinstated from the Island.

Now, why would I have to ask for that? It's because, first off, the marine transportation services to the North Coast of Labrador, to my district, were done without the consultation, the full consultation of the Nunatsiavut Government, which is actually recognized as self-government. In actual fact, the Nunatsiavut Government has accused this provincial government of actually enacting changes without consultation and actually being in violation of the Land Claims Agreement.

It's quite sad, too, you know, I don't have the ability to spend \$11.5 million on paving in my own district. Maybe if I did, I would be sitting in the House and I would be talking over everybody who's trying to speak.

In my district, in actual fact, there's –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: In my district, we're looking at another budget, and we actually have trouble getting food into our communities. We have trouble actually travelling in and out of our communities. If this was anywhere else in the province, I don't think this would have happened.

First off, I don't think that they would have taken away marine services for transportation of food, building materials, all our community needs, while a Member of government was

sitting and representing our district. That's really unheard of. So what kind of consideration was given to my district? None. None. So we're asking for it to be taken back.

One of the things that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation that was talked about: genocide. Not cultural genocide, genocide. Since Canada was actually established, we looked at residential schools. But I have to say, Speaker, where's the residential schools that existed? Are they on the Island? No, they weren't on the Island. So everybody is talking about reconciliation and Indigenous groups now, putting it all in one big pot and talking about it over and over again.

But the problem in my district, where we have Innu and Inuit that were seriously harmed and actually have suffered real intergenerational trauma – has suffered real intergenerational trauma. What is intergenerational trauma? It's trauma that actually is year after year, generation after generation. And what's happening is there's never been any help for the people in my district. Yet, we were blamed.

When those videos came out from Davis Inlet, that was really something that was taken and, basically, they just blamed the Innu. But no one really talked about the harm that was done to the Innu. That, in actual fact, it created so much harm that they were struggling. They were struggling as youth, as parents, as grandparents. They were all impacted: same thing with the Inuit.

I gave a Member's statement just recently on Boas Jararuse. As a young man with a young family, he was forced to resettle, relocate, from Hebron. They were collected in the church, the Moravian Church. I call him Uncle Boas out of respect. Uncle Boas always talked about the fact that they did it in the church because they knew that the people, the Inuit, wouldn't speak out against this decision.

They were relocated; sometimes families were broken up. It's so important to understand that it's not just the residential schools that harmed the Inuit and the Innu of my district; it's basically the forced relocation with the Innu. They were put on an island in Davis Inlet. That

was one of the strategies there, was to keep them from going off on the land.

There are so many different ways that the people have been harmed, but no one really wants to talk about that any more. In actual fact, the phrase intergenerational trauma has been used so much, people are tired of it. They're sick and tired of hearing about intergenerational trauma. But the biggest problem is this government has not done anything other than superficial, pretentious things.

Now, there's really value in symbolism. I understand that and also there's value in re-educating people about the harms that were done. But, at the end of the day, people can't eat murals that cost a lot of money to actually put in the House of Assembly. People can't eat murals. Statues: statues are not going to help you feed your children and heat your house. How can we get out of intergenerational trauma when this Liberal government continues to do these things without actually addressing real change?

It was this government that took away the freight boat and now has added burden of the trucking. If that was anywhere else on the Island, if that was on the Island, it wouldn't be heard of. It wouldn't be tolerated.

Do you know something? For example, me, I'm here, as the MHA, and I have to tell you I really don't like being the MHA in this House of Assembly. I don't really like actually a lot of things that I see. I really don't.

Do you know something? I understand why people write books after they retire from politics, because, in actual fact, I don't really know how to say something without getting kicked out of House, if I were to speak the real truth.

But, in actual fact, until real change comes to the Innu and the Inuit of Northern Labrador, this government will actually have blood on their hands because our people will continue to die.

I watched somebody die on a video. I watched it on a video. Me and a fellow MHA watched it. It was somebody who was harmed through intergenerational trauma, had fallen into addictions. And to slowly watch that person die

in this day and age, in this year – I watched it. That is the consequence of inaction. That's that the consequence of the superficial, pretentious garbage that comes out of the mouth of some of the Members who are supposed to be looking after the Indigenous people.

Who are the Indigenous people? Well, I can take you into my communities, if any one of the ministers actually bothered to go anywhere else than Nain and fly in on the morning flight and get out on the afternoon flight, if you ever, ever come up into my district.

Now, I tell you, there were a lot of Liberals that went into Makkovik that went over trouting and fishing with my cousin who took them out. And, you know, when I was campaigning one of the biggest complaints was that the only time they saw those Liberal, whoever they were, because no one knew who they were, was when they got off the plane and when they rushed back with their coolers full of trout and salmon and fish to catch the flight out of Makkovik. People in Postville didn't see them; people in Rigolet didn't see them; people in Hopedale didn't see them.

Yet, we are continued to be harmed by these crazy prices that we have no control over by the lack of services that we never, ever got.

One of the fallacies in this province is that the Indigenous people of Northern Labrador, the real Inuit, the real Innu who exist today that continue with their traditions and their language, they actually destroyed the infrastructure that was given to them, that basically undermined the services that were given to them. That's why they're all up there sniffing gas. That's why they're all up there killing themselves. That's been said. I've actually had it said to me many times.

And do you know something? Some of the people that killed themselves, suicide, were relatives of mine: relatives of mine, friends of mine. People that died, people that were murdered, the murdered women and Indigenous girls, whatever the fancy acronym for that is, that actually cost the federal government so much money to have the inquiry into. What's being done about that? Who was murdered? I can tell you who was murdered. I've actually

had relatives of mine murdered, friends of mine. My brother's girlfriend was murdered. One of my best friend's mother was murdered. We don't talk about that.

And I think I mentioned in the House the one person that people know in this province who they didn't know – everybody knew Dana Bradley. Everybody knew the name Dana Bradley in this province. No one knew the name Henrietta Millek, but she was an Inuit woman from Northern Labrador that was down here and was murdered – my sister's roommate.

I have got to tell you, it really impacts people. When I was growing up and when I went to university, I actually sat down one day and I was trying to remember all of the people I knew that committed suicide in the communities. I had to go through all my fingers and I was going through the years and I missed people – people that were close to me.

The thing about it is until services and infrastructure are actually brought into Northern Labrador – and do you know what really, really bothers me? One of the things that would actually change life in Northern Labrador would be a road or would be an extension in improvement of the airstrips that would improve transportation, as I keep bringing up in my petitions.

Do you know who was going to pay for most of that? Practically all of that infrastructure would be paid by, by the federal government. And one of the reasons why this province doesn't want to do that is because after it is built, they would have to maintain it. That was said to me and my response is maintain it like you do the rest of the roads in the province – like the rest of the roads in the province. Really? Honestly?

That's why we never ever got adequate – and for me, it's really hard. Honestly, most of my days, looking back in physics when we did university physics, college physics, it talks about inertia. And the definition of inertia is a body in motion will remain in motion unless it is acted on by an outside force. A body at rest will remain at rest unless it is acted on by an outside force.

And the thing about it is if we had people in this House that was interested in the greater good of

everybody in the province and actually worked on that instead of just their own agendas, instead of getting all the paving in their district or actually just looked at oh, I can talk to Dr. – I can't say his name – I can talk to the Minister of Health about my particular patient's issue and then I can go back to him and that will boost me up. Oh, look, that will get me votes. Instead of saying that this is a chronic issue that's experienced by many, many people in the province that needs to be addressed for the greater good. You might not get the attention, you might not get the recognition but, at the end of the day, the people in the province would actually do a lot better.

Where's that? That's not here. There are very, very few times that I actually see that come forward. That's the biggest problem I have with this House of Assembly. The self-serving rhetoric that goes on, it's ridiculous. Here I am, and I'm no better. I'm just a little, old woman that came out of the North Coast. I mean, really, honestly.

But you know something? When I ran, I expected more. I expected better; I did. I had some delusion. Honourable – this House isn't honourable. It's not filled with honourable Members. We may not have criminal records, but I tell you some of the action that we do have consequences that are far reaching. In my mind, it might as well be criminal.

Actually pretentious, superficial words, and nothingness that comes out of people's mouth, really, is unacceptable. For me it's difficult to deal with that: health care. How many people do I know in Northern Labrador – most of our patients that have cancer, or had cancer, were diagnosed too late for treatment, even in 2022. My sister-in-law – she had a family history – was misdiagnosed and even when she was finally diagnosed, in actual fact, they failed to make the appointment for her to go out for her treatment. They were waiting – my sister-in-law.

I tell you something now; one of the reasons why it's hard to talk about is because she died a week before my uncle, both of them with cancer. I have to say I think he lived the extra week just to give us that little bit of comfort. Sometimes when I'm dealing with factors on the North Coast and I'm trying to talk about stuff that I

knew that I was a party to, in actual fact, I have such trouble remembering. Like I talked about – I won't say his name, but I talked about a singer. This person that was so musically inclined and did so much for our people. I said he died with TB, but in actual fact that was another younger man who died with TB. He actually died with cancer. But I got to tell you, when you lose so many people who mean so much to you, it impacts you, emotionally. And the problem with actually travelling on the North Coast, and you get to know so many people, you get to know who's impacted, who dies.

I may have watched a woman die on video, but how many more do I know that died in snowbanks? How many people do I know that was actually repeatedly, repeatedly abandoned and neglected? With no supports, right? And the thing is, and I keep saying now, are we not a part of this province? I know people roll their eyes. And you should, you should just keep rolling them, buddy, because in actual fact you're not helping to solve the problems of this province as far as I can see.

But at the end of the day, we really do need help. It's not this superficial, pretentious, hot air of nothingness that seems to come from the side of government. I've got to tell you, everybody over here on this side is thinking it. I may be the only one saying it, but I've got to tell you. One of the things I always say is, if I say something that gets me kicked out, would I actually stand up and apologize to get back in? I think I owe my people that I would actually have to swallow my pride and apologize just so I could come back and try to get some more done.

Anyway, there are positive things going on in my district; our people are very resilient. I just have to look out to our youth. Just recently, I got so many calls from the Makkovik team trying to get out to the provincial regionals in Goose Bay. They couldn't because of the weather and all the delays. We thought they weren't going to get out. They finally got out and they took first place overall. The young males did quite well actually; they got first place, second place and third place. The girls did really well as well.

But let's just talk about that now for a second. I want to bring up something now; I've got 28 seconds left. To all the young girls that are

growing up in this province, I want to say to them: I don't want you just to get 66 cents when your cousin who's a male, your brother who's a male gets a dollar. And that's something that we need to actually fight for. We need to all work together, I agree with that. But, at the end of the day, it's like solving problems; you have to take action.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

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

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

I'd like to start off by picking up on what the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands spoke about, I'll just take a second to talk about the helmet legislation that did come in a while ago. The minister, of course, she is from Grand Falls-Windsor. She comes from a great family and she knows about the Side By Sides, quads, all kinds of stuff out there. But make no mistake, we were under the impression that it would be given some serious, serious consideration.

I would like to know what that serious consideration was. In my opinion, it's a government overreach. We stated our case and why enclosed Side By Sides with seat belts, a helmet isn't warranted. The people of the province have spoken and, like everything else, the detachment is there where government just doesn't seem to be listening.

So we are going to chalk that up to government overreach, in my opinion. It's too bad because all of these people have bought \$30,000, \$35,000 vehicles and now have to wear a helmet. If they had known this beforehand, they wouldn't have bought the vehicle. Plain and simple. Because they feel as though they can't enjoy their drive right now or their Sunday drive with their family and that's a shame.

But, again, it's just another example of a detachment from the people that government are supposed to represent. Unfortunately, that's what we are left with.

I am going to take a moment and talk about the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and thank them very much for putting their faith in me twice. The first time there was no doubt it was blind faith. The second time, I would like to think that I proved myself in some way and I thank them all for re-electing me.

We've got some great things happening in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. One thing we have happening is innovation. We have the only aquamation cremation system east of Montreal, which is a big deal. My good friend, Mike Goodyear, who is also a captain at the fire department in Grand Falls-Windsor, he brought in this system. It's very clean for the environment – very environmentally friendly. There's no cremation. What it does is it's an aquamation system, which does the same thing as cremation but in a much more efficient manner and it's very environmental friendly.

The guy has been booked up forever. People like it. And I just want to tip my hat off to him for taking a chance – getting that innovation to Grand Falls-Windsor. People from all around the province now are checking this out and he deserves accolades for that.

The salmon season, of course, is coming up in the Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District and the Exploits River is one of the greatest rivers in all of Canada for salmon fishing. So we're looking forward to seeing the anglers out there in due time. I know that they enjoy themselves out there and we enjoy having them.

Of course, if they're looking for a place to stay, Riverfront Chalets. My friend Todd Parsons, he's expanding his venture up there. He's bringing in some pods now that are fully equipped with bathrooms, the ceiling is all opened up to glass, you can stargaze, a hot tub is going to be by each of these pods. It's absolutely fantastic to see.

That's the way this province needs to move in the right direction. He's running into a little bit of trouble right now with the land he has. I'm hoping the Department of Fisheries can fix him up because it's important.

I wish Todd the best of luck. I hope that he doesn't run into any more difficulties, because

I'm hoping that government is going to help him instead of hinder him.

Sometimes common sense isn't that common – I think somebody said it a while ago. Sometimes when we look at policy, the policy shouldn't always be black and white when it comes from government. The policy should have room for common sense. I'll just leave it at that.

Crown lands, of course, is a huge one. I have a gentleman now out in Grand Falls-Windsor who's had a cabin next to a lake since 1981. They're asking this gentleman, on his own dime, to come out and move this cabin, and it's been there since 1981. You look at that, that's over 40 years. Again, we need some common sense to come in there. That cabin's been fine since 1981, no issues. That man should be able to leave it there, absolutely.

Marathon Gold: We are very, very pleased to have Marathon Gold up in the Buchans, Millertown district. It's going to bring about 450 jobs. We're very excited, the spinoffs are going to be great and it's going to bring some real economic activity to my district. So we're very, very excited about that.

I want to thank Marathon Gold and everybody that works there. Matt Manson, he's the president and CEO and, of course, Tim Williams, he's the chief operating officer. Myself and Tim get together just about every other week and chat. They're very happy with the way things are going and so am I.

And just one other thing. We're going to talk about Kellie Loder. Kellie Loder is from Badger. We are very proud –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – of Kellie Loder. I guess they are on *America's Got Talent* tonight, is it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: *Canada's Got Talent.*

C. TIBBS: Sorry, *Canada's Got Talent* tonight. So that'll be for the semifinals tonight and we're going to be watching them. I hope they give it their all, and I know that Kellie will. We look forward to seeing them win the prize. They do

great work. They are a songwriter, they are a singer and they do great work. So thank you very much to Kellie Loder.

I want to talk about the Buchans Highway for one moment. It's in rough shape. We have logging trucks going back and forth. Sometimes 20 logging trucks a day going back and forth out the Buchans Highway and it's ripping up this highway over and over and over again. We've had loads spill out onto the highway, logs spill out. It can be a dangerous situation sometimes. Now, with Marathon Gold going up there, we're going to have a lot of mining trucks, big trucks. Nothing tears up our highways like these big trucks.

We need to ensure that the work is going to be done to keep them intact for the residents that actually use the place. I know that the province is going to get revenue upon revenue from these companies, whether it be the logging companies or Marathon Gold, the revenue is going to come in, the royalties are going to come in. I believe that we need to sit down and look at some sort of legislation that's going to put in place money, a certain pot of money that can keep these roads maintained, because it's not fair to the people that use them every single day.

So I'm hoping to sit down with government and work together to come up with a solution that can work best for the people up around that area, and the people throughout all the province here. If a new company comes in and they're going to be making a lot of money and paying some of those revenues out to government, we need a specific pot of money to ensure the safety of the roads for the residents that have been there for 50, 60 or 70 years and continue to use those roads.

The safety concerns up there, of course, the brush cutting; it needs to be done.

The washouts alongside the Buchans Highway, if a car is coming down that highway at 80 kilometres an hour and it catches one of those washouts, well b'y they're done. They are absolutely done. We've been asking – no roadwork has been done up there since I've been elected. I really hope that the minister comes out with something this year to ensure that the people of Buchans have a safe place to drive and

the people of Millertown and Millertown Junction have a safe place to drive.

Cell service, of course, is another one up there. We had a couple of people breakdown up there, middle of the night, no cellphone service and walked for kilometres. As a matter of fact, we had a school bus driver, no kids were on the bus, thankfully, but the school bus broke down and that man had to walk six or seven kilometres to get back to try to use a phone. In 2022, that's not acceptable. God forbid, if that was the middle of winter and he had some kids on board. It would have been pretty bad.

Sticking with roads, Mr. Speaker, the Trans-Canada Highway going through Grand Falls-Windsor has an issue. It has a terrible issue. It happens on both ends, it's a divided highway, as most people know as they drive across the province. We have an issue with people veering off before the divided highway into the other lane. It mostly happens when people are going west; they switch over into the eastbound lane. It happens on a weekly basis. We had two fatalities last year. The fire department, who dealt with this, said it was one of the worst accidents they've ever seen. So you can see how it takes its toll on a community in general.

We need something to be done out there. I am not an engineer, but I have been pleading with the minister, the Premier, this government to do something. Ed Card, the former mayor of Badger, called me last week. He said: Chris, I was driving back to Badger and I missed him by an inch. Now you picture that. You're going through Grand Falls-Windsor, which is a 90-kilometre-per-hour zone, most people probably go 100; divided highway, it bends around, and you see a car barrelling towards you at 90 or 100 kilometres per hour well.

This isn't a one-time occurrence. This is happening over and over and over again, and I want to go on record here today to express the urgency that something needs to be done. I don't care if you've got to shut down that highway and turn it into a 40- or 50-kilometre zone until we figure out what has to be done. But somebody is going to be hurt or killed once again. So I want to express that urgency.

I put up a post on social media a while ago, encouraging people to come up with ideas, people who have driven the roads for so long, and a couple of people chimed in. I want to address this. A couple of people chimed in and said: People need to pay better attention. I couldn't agree more. Absolutely, people need to pay better attention. But how is that going to help you, or your family, or me or my family, when we are driving perfectly at 90 kilometres per hour in our own lane and we get hit head on?

My son just got his licence. My son isn't allowed on the highway in Grand Falls-Windsor. I forbid him. Because I am terrified that something like that is going to happen again. To one of my constituents, not just my son. I am absolutely terrified. So I am going on record today again, and I hope the minister is listening, hope the Premier's listening – I hope somebody's listening – because another fatality, and we're all going to remember this, May 3 – another fatality is going to happen if something is not done. And this will be brought up again. So I'm begging and pleading for somebody to do something before somebody else is killed.

Health care: We spoke yesterday about Preston Pardy, and I am happy to announce that I spoke with Preston just a little while ago and he is out of surgery and he is in recovery up in Ottawa.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: I want to thank Preston for speaking out for so many others. It's not an easy thing to do, but he spoke out, he told the truth and he told his story. But it's so important for the people that are coming behind him. Preston's 44 years old, he has two children, he has a wife, he had a double bypass and of course he had to be sent up there. Fortunately he got the surgery in time, he is resting and I cannot wait for Preston to get back home and we're going to see him then.

In Grand Falls-Windsor, we have an emergency room that is overloaded. It's unreal. Now, we addressed this with the minister almost three weeks ago. The minister said, of course, that they're trying to clear up the backlog within two weeks; not even close. We are not even close to it being cleared up yet.

Part of it, of course, is people waiting to get into long-term. The acute care centre is overloaded with people that shouldn't be there and, of course, lack of family doctors. So when somebody has a health issue, you can't blame them, they get scared, they need to see a doctor and there are no doctors to see, right down to the emergency room.

I want to thank the staff, in the emergency room especially, all throughout Grand Falls-Windsor medical facility, but especially the people in the ER that are dealing with this. I know a lot of the nurses. I know a lot of the doctors. I know a lot of the support staff down there, and my God are they fantastic people. The work environment there is great. They're so upbeat. They work together as a team; they do great work. They have to put up with a lot. The strain on them is absolutely insurmountable. I'll leave it at that, but I just want to thank them there for that, and we look forward to the long-term care centre being opened, the ER backlog being cleared up so these people can breathe, because right now they cannot and that's a shame.

You have to ask yourself: What's going to happen to these people if they don't get a little bit of easement, or a little bit of relief? They're going to go off to another province as well, or they're going to go somewhere else. We're hoping to keep them right there.

I'd like to touch on the cost of living, of course, because that's what we're talking about. When it comes to the budget, the budget is going to talk about the cost of living. We need to ensure that it's brought up. Inundated, absolutely inundated with people that cannot afford to live. It's amazing; it truly is. I'm not going to stand here and point fingers at anybody, but it's amazing, and I know 40 Members have to be hearing it. We've been saying it over and over again.

I think the problem that we're starting to encounter is the normalization of the cost of living in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that's just it; that's the way it is. It's like that across Canada. It's like that around the world. It's not normal to choose between food and heat. It's normal at all. So stop normalizing this. People are suffering and people need help.

We may not have all the answers, but I hope that we can work together to have answers. Now, government continues to ask us: Well, what would you do – what would you do? Repeal the sugar tax, immediately. The sugar tax should be repealed immediately.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: You want to know what we can do to alleviate some of the stress and the costs of people during some of the worst times of their life – get rid of the sugar tax. It's simple, go back and get rid of it. We don't need it. The people of the province don't need it. They're paying enough as it is. Unfortunately what we're going to see, Mr. Speaker, is an exodus. It's coming – it's coming.

My fear is this, and we're starting to see it already. The rest of the provinces are beginning to pick up after COVID much quicker than we are. They are. I talk to other people from other provinces as well. Once people see this, the playing field does not become level again, and we begin to lose people. And it will be a mass exodus. You know, we talk about immigration, same thing. Who is going to want to come to Newfoundland and Labrador in the state that we are?

If they see the cost of fuel, if they see the roads that they're driving on, the health care system, people are not going to want to come. If people do come, by God when they get here they may not want to stay. So we need to have more of an aggressive attack with the province to ensure that when people do come here, they see it. Come Home Year – it's not Come Home Year summer 2022; it's Come Home Year 2022.

We are debilitated right now in this province. If you drive across this province, it's absolutely embarrassing – the road signs – and they've been like it for years. They may have been like it in this administration, I don't know. But I know they've been like it for years. Not just broken, scratched up – these road signs are cut in half, some of them. They are absolutely cut in half and strung out alongside the road. I don't understand, I'm hoping that some of these road signs can get fixed before people come to this province, because it's embarrassing when you get off a plane and you look and you see: er

Lake. Well, those signs are cut in half, or Butter Pot Park. A lot of these signs need to be fixed, as well as the roads of course.

I said when we first started debating the Come Home Year 2022, cellphone service. If we're going to be putting up these signs, and you know that Buchans highway, for instance, you're going to be 45 minutes without cellphone service, let's put up a sign there for the people that are coming here and let them know that for the next 45 minutes, no cellphone service. Because if they break down and they take out their cellphone to call for help and they don't get it, it's not going to be good for them, of course. It's going to leave a sour taste in their mouth.

We want people to come here; we want people to stay here. It's a beautiful province, it truly is; it has the ability to be a beautiful province. We were on top once and we will be on top again, and we want to ensure that we can show the rest of the country and the rest of the world that as well.

Speaker, the last couple of minutes, I'd like to talk about working people across this province. I want to thank all of those people out there, man, woman and child, that get up every single day and put it on the line. Whether you're working part-time at 20 hours a week, 40, 50, 60 hours a week – and these people are still struggling, even though they shouldn't have to. But they get up, they get up, they put on their workboots, they put on their suit and tie, they put on their apron and they go out and they give their all every single day, only to come home to stay up at 2:30 in the morning to worry about a home heating bill.

That's not right. That's not right. What's going to happen is Alberta is booming again; the West is booming again. These people are going to get wise to it and they're going to say my dollar can go a lot further in a place like that. That's exactly how it's going to go, I guarantee you.

My last minute and 45, Speaker, I want to talk about mental health once again. I can't talk about it enough. I really can't. It deserves a full day of chatter, I guarantee you. People in this province are feeling the crunch so bad right now. Everybody is walking around with a big smile on their face, most days, but I said it before and

I'll say it again, a lot of people are dying on the inside.

They get home at the end of the day and they face their bills, they face the kids who want to do something or the kids want to go somewhere.

When I was elected I came home from Alberta to work here. I left a job in Alberta that I absolutely loved. I loved drilling for oil. I did it for 17 years. I would encourage anybody to try drilling, offshore drilling whatever else, the oil sector is something we should be proud of, but I loved my job. I took a huge gamble to come home here and do what I do and, hopefully, get elected, and by the grace of God, the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans elected me.

The reason why I came home, I never aspired to be a politician. I don't even consider myself a politician now, I really don't. I wanted to come home because I saw there was going to be no future for my children, for your children here at home, for the children of the province to grow up. There was going to be no future here. We see it already. We see people leaving all ready. I wanted to ensure that future was going to be here for my kids and for everybody else's kids out there. That's exactly what I'll continue to do.

I want to thank, once again, the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans for electing me. God bless you all. I look forward to representing you for the next so many years to come.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm very honoured to speak on the budget today and on this particular amendment to the budget. I just wish to extend again my sincere appreciation to the people of the District of Harbour Main for giving me this honour, for electing me to serve them. It is truly a privilege to do that.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the budget, there are a few questions that come to mind when I reflect and contemplate whether to support the budget or not. There are several questions which I think are necessary to ask when we try to decide whether we're going to support this budget.

First of all, one of the questions that I think is important, it's probably the most important question that has to be asked, that is: Did the government listen? I'm going to address that in a few moments. But I am going to go through a few other questions that I think are important to assess and to analyze in this decision whether to support the budget or not.

The second question: Is this the budget that our province needs? I'll repeat it. Is this the budget that our province needs – I would even say – at this particular time? I'm going to discuss that as we move along.

I think the third question that needs to be asked: Is it the best that can be done? Is this budget the best that could be done?

The fourth question is important to ask: Does this budget drive jobs? Does it encourage growth in our society and in our province?

Finally, another question I think that needs to be asked: Does it inspire confidence? Does it inspire confidence in the people of our province? Does it protect our vulnerable populations?

I think those are some of the questions that, for me, are important to consider in whether we can support this budget and whether I can support this budget.

I'd like to go back, first of all, to what happened with respect to the government's five-point plan. That can be tied directly to my first question: Did the government listen to the people of the province?

Well, I think we just need to look at that five-point plan that was announced prior to the budget coming out. I think you'll get your answer to that question whether the government listened to the people. The answer to that question is, no, they did not listen to the people.

What did they do? Let's just reflect on what they did in that announcement with respect to the high cost of living and the rising cost of living that the people of our province are experiencing.

They announced I believe it was approximately \$22.2 million. There was an Income Supplement, a Seniors' Benefit, an income support, electric vehicles, oil to electricity transition, but, Speaker, that announcement and that response fell short, in my respectful opinion. There were way too many people that were left out with respect to that response.

We've seen such a high rise in gas prices. Yes, we know that there was a 10 per cent rise with respect to income support and Seniors' Benefit programs. That will definitely not cover the significant rise in gas prices.

Let's look at the electric vehicle funding piece. So we know that there was \$1.9 million on electric vehicle infrastructure. By the way, that announcement I think had been made last year by government, but nevertheless they announced that again, \$1.9 million. And then they also expanded the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program.

Okay, that's good, but I ask the Speaker, will those measures help the people of our province? Is this what our people need right now? These measures, I would argue, do not help the people struggling with the price of gas, who cannot afford – they cannot afford new electric or hybrid vehicles. I mean, we know that, that's a no-brainer; we know that. So these kind of announcements and responses, that five-point plan, doesn't cut it. They were not listening, Mr. Speaker, they were not.

Is this a budget our province needs? I would again submit and argue that this is not the type of budget that our province needs right now. We know that people are struggling.

I was talking to a gentleman earlier this morning on the phone from South River and it is heartbreaking, Speaker. It is heartbreaking what people are having to endure. He said to me things are getting worse and actually he went through exactly how much he paid for furnace oil. He was so upset. He said he spent \$300 worth of oil on February 25.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – and that gave him 48.2 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I need to hear the Member speak.

Thank you.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: This gentleman from South River had spent \$300 worth of oil on February 25; it gave him 48.2 gallons of oil. On March 24, \$300 worth of oil gave him 38.2 gallons; \$300 worth of oil on April 1 gave him 31 gallons of oil.

When we discussed it today, he said basically he can't afford to live. Things are getting worse. He said now, as of last Wednesday, it was I believe he said \$1.67 a litre and now up to \$1.93. So he said I don't know what we're going to do. Everyone he's talking to he said they're in the same position. They cannot make ends meet. They're making very difficult choices as to what to do, whether they're going to be able to eat, or put money in their cars for gas. He said forget about going to the grocery store. He said the price of groceries is gone beyond.

He said I go into a store with \$100 for groceries, I'm lucky if I come out with two bags – two bags. Then he also said about everyone trying to get you to eat healthy. He said the people want to eat healthy, but he said forget about that. You can't afford to eat healthy either.

So it's very heartbreaking when you hear from seniors. He said things are just getting worse, what are we going to do? I know that government has basically said their hands are tied. Their hands are tied; they can't do anything about it, despite almost 40 cent a litres of gas going to provincial tax. Yet, the provincial government says it can't do anything about it.

But, Speaker, I challenge the government. They can. They have options to take. They can take real action, but they choose not to. It's about

choices. It's about priorities. Government is not choosing to help the people that are suffering right now.

What can they do? Well, let's look at it. We have proposed, and the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, our shadow minister for Finance, has repeatedly made suggestions to be part of the solution. Let's implement the home heating fuel rebate. That would offset the cost of home heating fuel. From what I understand, our province, Newfoundland and Labrador, is one of only two provinces in Canada that does not offer a rebate on the carbon tax, for example.

So we see there are options. Delay the implementation of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax – delay it. We need immediate, urgent relief. People need it now. This is a serious situation. It is a crisis. We're hearing it every day from our constituents and I am sure we all are hearing this same story. They are reaching out for us to help.

In fact, that gentleman I was talking to in South River today said what are we going to do? I said I don't know what to tell you. I'm representing your interests; I'm trying to get government to listen, as is our Opposition. He said, well maybe it is time for us to have demonstrations and protests. That's what that man said to me. He said, because if they're not listening – and what it makes me wonder is do they even care. I mean, surely, they must care about what's happening to the people in our province.

But again, getting back to some of the solutions that we can propose and we have proposed as an Opposition, ask the PUB to review the five cents per litre charged on gas. That was implemented when Come By Chance stopped producing. There's another suggestion, another way of approaching this.

Speaker, I don't think anyone on the opposite side is listening to us. I really am concerned with why there is no immediate action. When we look at the fuel prices right now – and I've had a number of constituents trying to understand why they are so high. We hear a lot of excuses from government, but we also have to be fair and balanced. I believe that is important when we are trying to solve these problems.

So I have been asked the question: Well, why are our fuel prices so high, especially when Canada has plenty of crude oil? From what I understand and from what I've learned one of the reasons – and I do recognize this because government does raise this – there's no denying, yes, there is an increasing demand for oil around the world. That's not in dispute and therefore the rising fuel prices. There is a clear supply shortage on the market. So we'll acknowledge that. That's true and that does affect the world crude oil prices.

What else? Of course, we know the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine. That's an important factor as to why the fuel prices are so high. We'll acknowledge that. We look at oil production and we look at the fact that Canada, for example, is the fourth in terms of proven oil reserves in the world and Russia is eighth. So oil production, however, Russia is the second worldwide. It produces, I believe it's 9.9 million barrels a day. Canada is fourth with respect to oil production.

It's a complicated equation, which does involve global markets. I get it, there are no easy solutions regarding prices at the pumps. But Speaker, that can't be used as excuses. We cannot allow government to deflect and to use that as the reason for inaction.

Government has opportunity here, Speaker. They have opportunity with respect to implementing the home heating fuel rebate. They have opportunity to ask the PUB to review the five cents per litre that's charged on gas. They have the opportunity to delay the implementation of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. The carbon tax – they had opportunity there, but they're not listening. So again, when I come back to whether I can support this budget, I definitely vehemently oppose and object to this budget, particularly at this time.

Speaker, I need to also look at a couple of other things with respect to the price increases that people are experiencing. When we look at the gas, when we look at the groceries, when we look at all of these – the consumer price index has risen, and we know that that's the case as well. But when we see price increases in essentials – these are essentials that people need to live; these are not luxuries, Speaker – this

impacts everyone. It doesn't only impact seniors, but it really is devastating for seniors and low- and fixed-income individuals. Devastating when we see these price increases in essentials.

But it also affects the working and middle class. And we are all hearing this every day. When I hear from people in my district say, well, why aren't you doing anything about it, I think sometimes they don't understand that I'm not in government; I'm not in a position to implement the needed policies that should take place. But when I hear seniors calling, like this senior from South River, saying he's struggling to make ends meet, to buy food, to heat his home, his medications – him and his wife, their medications are expensive, and then driving the car.

They're choosing between which necessity they will do without. That is what's happening to the people in our province. Right now it's happening and I don't know what's going to happen, what's going to give here. Because if we do not do something here to change this – and I call upon government, I call upon the Minister of Finance to amend this budget. They have the power. They're hearing from us.

The Official Opposition represents approximately 30 per cent of the population. You're hearing from us; you have to listen. You have to listen to what we're saying. We're bringing you the concerns of the people that we represent and that all of us represent. So it's up to you to make the necessary amendments. And that's going to require adaptability. That's going to require flexibility on your part. That's going to require listening. And if you do not listen to the people that you serve, the government will lose any of its really moral authority to govern, in my view.

So, Speaker, the issue with respect to the budget, when I hear the government saying that there are no taxes and fees will increase, that's not true. We saw the carbon tax increase in 2022. We saw the regressive sugar tax introduced in September. We're seeing these things. We're seeing the cost of fuel going up, home heating fuel and diesel. Necessities are becoming less affordable. It's not good enough. We implore government to listen to the people it represents.

So, Speaker, at this point in time I would like to move a subamendment, seconded by the Member for Exploits: That the amendment that was previously presented, the non-confidence motion, be amended by changing the period at the end "thereof" to a comma, and also by adding immediately thereafter the following words: "and that this House also faults the government for its failure to demand or deliver fair financial transfers for Newfoundland and Labrador from the Government of Canada."

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

This House will recess and we will take a look at the subamendment.

Recess

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The subamendment that was presented by the Member for Harbour Main is deemed to be in order.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

On this subamendment, I'm going to talk about health care, specifically not only in our province, but as well in the District of Harbour Main. I also want to talk about the subamendment that was introduced, just by way of explaining the clause: "... this House also faults the government for its failure to demand or deliver fair financial transfers for Newfoundland and Labrador from the Government of Canada." I'm going to talk about that, as well, during my 20-minute speech.

First of all, health care. We know that health care – and I don't even know if want to call it health care because it's not really health care, it's the system. Let's just call it the system. The system is broken. The system in our province is very concerning. We're at a crisis. I mean beyond crisis, really. When we look at the shortage of doctors we're at 100,000 doctors

throughout the province, shortage of nurses, all of that is contributing to, I would say we can call it substandard care in our province.

We know from the problems out in Central Newfoundland, for example – and my colleagues have raised this many times – several communities in the region are losing their doctors by the end of June. Harbour Main, even in my district, we're losing a doctor in South River at the end of June.

So we're all inundated with calls from our constituents, from concerned patients about the fact that they don't have doctors. Let's look at where this is and the picture to try to understand what's happened. We know there's been seven years of this government. They've had opportunity. This crisis didn't just happen overnight. We know that. That is fact. There was warning, there was notice, but now we see some sort of attempt at action to deal with these problems. But what concerns me is why wasn't there some preventative measures put in place years ago?

Everyone knew this was coming. I've talked to family doctors in my district who said they knew that this was coming, and it was anticipated. Let's look at what the president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has stated, Dr. Susan MacDonald. She, basically, in her advocacy with this government and to try to bring attention to this problem, has referred to the fact that we are losing doctors. Yes, there are doctors retiring. What else is very important is that we're seeing a lot of burnout, we're seeing a lot of frustration and we're seeing doctors that are just not prepared to work under the conditions. The lack of work-family balance is important and is a factor as well.

Virtual care: Dr. MacDonald and the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has pointed to this and have raised concerns about virtual care. Family doctors remaining are being told to do virtual care or virtual emergency rooms. But her concern and the NLMA's concern is that they're going to be pulled from their own family practice and their own patients. How is that helping the situation?

The whole health care system is in dire straits, we all know that. The president of NLMA has cited a number of concerns. She is saying that many rural health care centres can no longer deliver the sustainable services because, as she called it, the physician workforce is destabilized. Yes, as I mentioned, the situation in Central is probably the worst but she used, I think, an important analogy to describe the situation of physicians trying to plug a dam about to burst. She said that is a dangerous situation, not only for the physician but also for the patient.

She has repeatedly, as has the Official Opposition, called on government to step in with a plan before it is too late. The alarm bells have been ringing but they have been falling on deaf ears of this government.

That brings me back to what I spoke to earlier, before I introduced this subamendment, the listening part. Government has to start listening. It has to engage more with the Opposition, with the communities, with these associations and with the NLMA. Well, we hear that they are meeting with them sometime next week. Hello, next week? This has been seven years in the making here. Meeting with them next week – Too little, too late.

So what is the key to improving health care, Speaker? I mean, there are no easy solutions, I know that. We are all aware of that. It is not an easy task and we understand that too. We're not suggesting that it is an easy task. But I think from what I've heard and from what our Opposition Members have heard from the people that we represent is they need to involve front-line stakeholders. They need to listen to people with lived experiences. They need to listen to people who have first-hand knowledge, and they haven't been doing that.

We wonder about the Minister of Health. I would argue that, quite frankly, he's missed the boat entirely. His priorities have been disconnected – disconnected from the reality, which is seen on the ground by our front-line workers. The minister's attention, in my assessment and analysis of what's happening, is on the boardrooms in our health care system, but not on the staff. Not on the people on the front lines. Not with the nurses and with the doctors.

That is a serious misstep and a serious error in judgment.

When we look at other organizations, the Registered Nurses' Union, Speaker, what did they have to say about the budget? They said: 2022 budget does nothing to help the retention and recruitment crisis in our health care system. These are not my words. The Nurses' Union have set out the concerns. So I ask you, what has this government done to address the understaffing in our health care system for the past seven years? I mean, why are we here now?

The minister, in Question Period, responds often with, well, we have the Health Accord, as that being the solution. There are good things in the Health Accord, there's no question about it. I've spoken to physicians, I've spoken to specialists who haven't even had the chance to read the Health Accord because they're so busy trying to care for their patients in this overburdened system that we have. So it's not a solution for today – it is not a solution for today. A 10-year plan is not a reason to ignore the issues today. So, Speaker, there's no relief in this budget in my view to address this critical situation with respect to health care.

So let's look at the health transfers. Increased health transfers were promised by the federal government. They were promised to increase money to this province for health care spending in the budget. Did that happen? No, Speaker. The Premier failed in getting any increase with the Liberal federal government.

The Health Accord called for additional health care investments by Ottawa, even that health care plan, which is a good plan in principle, but it called for additional health care investments by Ottawa, and it's needed. Why is it needed? To improve wait times, to give nurses and doctors some relief; to make sure everyone has a family doctor. Yet, seven years in government – the Minister of Health has had seven years, this crisis didn't happen overnight. There's no surprise here. We saw it coming. It was seen, we knew it. We had knowledge, prior knowledge. Yet, now we have people that are really suffering.

Speaker, I look to the surgery backlog, for example. I believe the Newfoundland and

Labrador Medical Association has said it's approximately 7,000 surgeries are wait-listed. That's in Metro St. John's area alone: 7,000 surgeries.

We have over 200 of those delayed surgeries involve cancer treatment, Speaker. Now, we all know cancer has touched us all. I'm sure everyone here, cancer has touched us all. Most of us have been impacted by cancer, the lives of loved ones, family, friends, colleagues – we all have personal experiences about cancer. But when we are seeing that there are delays in diagnosis, in treatment, in surgeries, can you even imagine? I can't even imagine what that must be. It must be very frightening when you are diagnosed with cancer and your surgery is being delayed.

We know that over 200 – I believe that's the latest stat that we have – delayed surgeries involve cancer treatment. That experience must be just unimaginable, how much stress and how frustrating and scary that must be. Their lives are at risk.

So what happens here? We need to see government engaging more. We need to see, for example, immediate and long-term consequences, we know. We're seeing all these disruptions in the health care system now, like the delayed surgeries, like the wait-lists of surgeries. We need to see that government is diligent, that they will anticipate, because they haven't done it before. But they need to start anticipating and preparing, like, for example, people that need to have treatment with chemotherapy, because if they're having their surgeries delayed, well what does that mean? That means if their surgeries are being delayed, perhaps they may have tumours in their body and if their surgeries are being postponed, it's possible that the cancer is advancing.

So what is government doing to anticipate and prepare for these contingencies because, surely, that's happening? If you have 6,800 surgeries wait-listed, 200 of those delayed surgeries involve cancer patients: is there a plan? What's happening to help these people?

It's very interesting that this week is Mental Health Week. I wonder how patients and families were affected when they were told they

had cancer but their surgery was being cancelled or postponed. How must they be feeling? We can only imagine the emotional and the mental health consequences of that for them.

We know, Speaker, as well, the current estimate with respect to Canadians is that 45 per cent of Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime: 45 per cent. We cannot ignore this fact.

So what we need to do, Speaker, is we need to work together: government, non-government, organizations, health care authorities, nurses' unions, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, we need to work together to make things better.

But I must say when I look at what is happening with Newfoundland, within our confederation, it is very concerning. We know that Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest taxes in the country. So we know that means it keeps consumers from spending. It keeps business from hiring. It keeps young people from staying here. The more people we lose, the less transfers we receive.

So that brings me to the subamendment. Based on the per capita formulas that exist now, the health care transfers and the equalization is not equitable and it is not fair to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So why is that? What does that mean? Because I have looked at it and we look at it in our Opposition, the federal funding programs, they're unfair. It is an unfair distribution of funds. We need to make these transfer payments fair and equitable. The health and social transfers should be based on need, not population.

But you might say, well, why should we do that? Are we asking Ottawa for something, you know, for a hand up?

No, we're not asking the federal government for a hand up or a handout. We're asking to be treated fairly in this Confederation that we joined in 1949. And that's not happening. If we were treated fairly, Speaker, within this

Confederation, we would be in the same fiscal position, perhaps, that provinces like Quebec and Nova Scotia are in. They receive federal transfers, which are denied to us, and they are achieving fiscal balances.

So, Speaker, I look at Quebec, for example, \$3 billion surplus. They get \$13 billion, the latest data that I have, in equalization. What does Newfoundland and Labrador get? Zero. The perverse rules of equalization have to be changed. They have to be addressed. And who is advocating for us on this? Who is advocating for fairness on our behalf in Ottawa? Who is seeking for this inequity to be remedied?

We have a provincial Liberal government that's silent on this. We have a provincial Liberal government, it bears repeating –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – that are silent on this. The federal government has failed to increase the amount of money given to this province for health care spending in the budget. They have failed to do that. We are entitled to that, as part of this Confederation. We are supposed to be equal partners in Confederation in this country. The federal government promised increases to health transfers, specifically to mental health – no. Did our Premier, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador secure an agreement from the Trudeau government for this year's budget? No.

So, Speaker, I am very concerned about these issues when it comes to our rightful place in this Confederation and how we continue to lack leadership on the part of our Liberal provincial government to advocate for our rights to be enforced.

Speaker, finally in cluing up, I do want to say that collaboration is the key here. It's a nice word, but you know what it is? It's a two-way street. It requires both sides engaging, both sides listening. It's time for the government, though, to hear the people say what they need. They're not listening. The people are desperate to be heard.

The people, though, of Newfoundland and Labrador are savvy. They are savvy. Then, when the government says they're doing all that they can do, guess what? People see through that. They know what's going on. They see the inadequacies in this budget. It needs to be amended, but they're not going to do it, Speaker. This needs to be amended. The people of this province are hurting.

The Minister of Finance claimed their focus is always on relentless pursuit of better, so I challenge the Minister of Finance, prove it. This budget doesn't meet the needs of the people. It needs to be adapted, it needs to be changed and it needs to be improved to meet the needs of the people you serve, and we all serve.

So show flexibility. Show a flexible approach. Show that you're adaptable. Bend your response. Meet the needs of the people that you serve. Because if you don't your own respectability, your own legitimacy will really be questioned in terms of how the people of this province see you.

So I would ask, with respect to this, that this is the hallmark of democracy here in the House of Assembly, and we have to engage in listening to one another.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

S. CROCKER: Oh my God!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to see the Minister of Tourism is so excited to hear me speak again. He'll listen just as intently as he always does.

Always an honour to stand in this House and represent the people of the District of Terra Nova and certainly the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Obviously, this budget and the time we're at in this province is a very hard time for everyone, and it's important for people to get up and speak to the budget. Something I'm a little sad to say that government hasn't got up

and done. They haven't spoke to it whatsoever, so it's a bit shocking –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: Oh good, but we presented a motion the other day for an emergency debate that got shut down because there was going to be lots of debate in the budget, and we haven't heard a peep, so you can't have it both ways. At the end of the day, it needs to be one way or the other.

Health care: Health care is such a huge issue for everyone in this province. We are overwhelmed with calls on a daily basis, and I'm sure everyone is. I have zero doubt that everyone in this House of Assembly is dealing with not just constituents and family and friends from their own ridings, but they're hearing from people whenever they're out to the grocery stores. When I'm here in St. John's and go somewhere, I've been approached several times by people talking about health care. It's a state; it really is.

I just recently learned Category B hospitals in Central are paying double the going rate now – double the going rate – in order to get doctors to go out there for a 24-hour period. So while the Minister of Health seems to think he's playing this elaborate game of chess, the reality of it is he's playing Jenga. He's taking a block from the bottom and he's putting it on top, and he's hoping that it's not going to topple over. But guess what? That's right where we are. It's about to topple and when you rob from Peter to pay Paul, it's gonna catch up.

And that is exactly what is happening in our health care. There are no solutions. If you think for a second that the solutions are right here right in front of us, absolutely not. And the sad part, as the Member for Harbour Main just elaborated very eloquently I might add, is that the current minister has had seven years – seven years – and by his own admission he understood the problems before he got involved in politics – seven years as a sitting minister. The Premier said he only ran because of the problems with health care. It was one of the cornerstones of his campaign, one of the reasons he got involved: because he knew the problems with our health care system.

I'll tell you what, my time in the military, I used to jump out of airplanes. That don't mean I know how to fly them. And they certainly don't know how to run health care, I can tell you that right now. Because we're in shambles.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We need to understand the people's needs. I've got to go back. The Member for Harbour Main, she talked very eloquently when she said that they haven't talked to the nurses or the doctors. But you know what the sad thing is? They don't have to talk to them. Turn on VOXM and listen to the ads they're running. You can listen to what the NLMA is saying and the Nurses' Union without even picking up a phone or writing a letter. They're screaming for help. Overworked, overburdened, understaffed, unaware of what's going on, no plan – all things they've said.

Quotes from people working in the medical situation: Do you think you could pick up another shift this weekend because there's nobody to cover? We're desperate. Oh no, we are accepting another diversion today. Quotes from medical people to patients: I know you're frustrated you had to drive three hours and then wait for six more, but we're doing our best.

These quotes are very common, not just in rural Newfoundland, but all throughout the province. The reality of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador is that the health care system on the Avalon and Eastern Health and rural Newfoundland are incredibly different. Nobody can tell me for a second that health care in Labrador or the Northern Peninsula, or the West Coast or Central is the same. You heard me ask a question today: Imagine an individual who was told by this minister when we reached out and said we have a patient – and we reached out he can't get a family. He needs to apply to the collaborative care clinic in Eastern. Here's the phone number. He calls them. This guy was born in Clarenville, Eastern Health. His family physician, Clarenville, Eastern Health. Under the care of specialists in St. John's, Eastern Health. Calls the number for the collaborative clinic – sorry, Sir, you live in Charlottetown, nothing we can do for you. How does that make sense?

This phone call happened not one day, not two days, not one week, not two weeks, but weeks after this government announced we're going to one health care authority. What's the sense of one health care authority if you don't know how you're going to look after it all? What's the sense if you're going to turn away a patient based on where he lives?

Now, I can tell you the people in Charlottetown are a heck of a lot closer to Clarenville than they are to Gander. Very simple. That's not tough geography. It's no different than patients in Clarenville getting diverted to Carbonear. It's no different than an ambulance – I had constituents in an accident last week. Instead of sending them to the Health Sciences, 12 kilometres east of Whitbourne, they sent them to Placentia. Serious bone injuries, it makes no sense. You don't have to have a medical degree or a business degree or any other kind of a degree to understand that our health care system is not falling. It has fallen apart. You also don't have to have much time in this House of Assembly to understand that it's happened on their watch.

Now, the Premier sits over here and when you talk about health care he quickly says I've only been here two years. Five minutes later, he says but a \$500-million debt you guys left us. You can't have it both ways, though. It might be true, but you cannot have it both ways and that's pretty simple. It's another excuse. The truth of it is you guys have failed to bring it across the finish line. You promised – as a matter of fact, from the EY report: “We take EY's recommendations seriously and it is our full intention to action them all including strengthening project governance and expanding oversight which we expect to have completed by the end of May.

“Schedule pressures and expected cost increases on the Muskrat Falls Project concern us all. The project is now being reforecast for cost and schedule....

“EY will assess the reasonableness of the revised forecast and will then present us with a final report following their review.” We will ensure the project is managed effectively within budget and on time.

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources, 2016, April 12. They were going to finish in 2017. Guess what? It's 2022.

S. CROCKER: It's a good investment.

L. PARROTT: Hear that? The Minister of Tourism is saying it's a good investment. I'm glad to hear him say that. As I talk about Muskrat Falls, he is saying it is a good investment. I'm glad to hear it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: It is about time someone on that side recognized it.

Our health care system, right now, has become unsustainable. If you don't believe that, talk to a nurse or talk to a doctor –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: But I will give you one better. Just for one second forget about the nurses, forget about the doctors and imagine you are a patient. Imagine you have cancer. Imagine you have an issue with your heart. Imagine you have had a stroke. You know what the Premier says?

He's going to reimagine. I challenge him to imagine what is going on with those people. As those people sit at home and try to understand what their future holds, nothing is changing. We are taking a block from the bottom, we're putting it on top and we're hoping that it is not going to topple over. It is a sad state when that is how we manage our health care. The people of this province deserve much, much better.

If you live in rural Newfoundland right now and you think about what it is going to cost you as a cancer – any kind of a specialty, really. Any specialty service that you have to go to, you're either going to the West Coast or to the Avalon, mostly to the Avalon. Think about the cost incurred. Now we can talk about the MTAP and all the different programs that are out there to help people, but the reality of it is: (a) people do not understand a lot of those programs, the educational material is not out there for people to know that they even qualify for them; and (b)

we have patients every single day who are not able to avail of services because they can't afford to travel, because of the cost of gas because of the cost of hotels, because of the cost of fuels.

Then, on top of that, add the fact that they could travel to St. John's, as an example, and they get here and an appointment is cancelled. Just imagine leaving the Northern Peninsula to come down here or Labrador, getting on a flight to come out here and being told, sorry, your appointment has been cancelled. We're going to reschedule you at the earliest convenience. Well, that individual may have waited two years in order just to get an appointment and now they have to wait another very extended long period of time.

We have 200 cancer patients awaiting surgery? I'm willing to bet you we have Members in this House that have serious ailments that have not only had to wait but are waiting for treatment. Now, nobody in this House deserves any special treatment, that I can guarantee you, but the men and women we represent, they deserve special treatment. They deserve much better than we are giving them and there is no question about that.

We have a Health Minister and a Premier who says, we're on it. The Health Minister talks all the time about the amount of family doctors we have in this province. We have more than our share of family doctors, 600-and-something family doctors. We've got every family doctor that we need. If that's the case, why is it 20 per cent of the population doesn't have a family doctor?

If the collaborative care clinics are the solution, why is it we're turning people away? None of it makes sense. It doesn't make any sense. So I believe that the minister, much like regionalization, doesn't have a plan. He's going through a process. He's throwing darts at the wall, playing darts with people's lives hoping that it works out okay, and it's simply not good enough.

Seven years sitting as a Minister of the Crown, representing one entity, the same position, for us to be in the position we're in right now, I would say if he could look anyone in this House and say that our health care system is better today

than it was seven years ago when he started, then maybe, maybe nobody would be talking the way they are. But I can guarantee you, our health system is far worse today than it was seven years ago, far worse. As a matter of fact, when he sat as the president of the NLMA, if you go back and listen to the things he said, all of those things are non-existent all of a sudden. How does that make sense? How can you go from A to B?

One of the Members talked here earlier about how people get in the government and they change. Absolutely right. Probably a good example; probably one of the best examples. You're talking about a guy who went from being the president of the NLMA and a national president, to coming in here and turning his back on the very people he represented. As a matter of fact, a couple of days ago when the NLMA came out talking about it, he said he responded to them with an email. He shouldn't have to respond to them. He should be the one going to them. It should be his initiatives that are keeping our health care system afloat. He shouldn't be waiting to get information from the NLMA or from any other entity in our health care system.

Our health care system is going to fall down around him and it's going to go unnoticed. It's sad. Our Premier had the opportunity to change it. He said he knew the problems when he got here, and when he got here two years ago, he put the exact same individual back in the same seat. He had the opportunity to change it and he failed, simple.

When I talk to people throughout my district and throughout the entire province, we talk about the ability to access services; mental health is one of the biggest things that comes to light all the time. It is incredible how many people cannot access mental health and it's okay to say. We've heard the minister talk about the robust program and how people are getting in to get mental health consults, first appointment. Guess what happens after that? Two-year waiting lists, maybe longer. Guess what happens in that period of time? Your mental health deteriorates exponentially.

Now, let's go back two years. Two years ago we had a mental health crisis. Two years ago we had a mental health crisis – pre-COVID. Now

add COVID into the mix. Take a bunch of senior citizens, lock them into houses by themselves; take a bunch of kids, lock them at home and put them on a video game, put them on a computer to try and go to school, and tell me what you expect is going to happen to their mental health.

Our mental health issues have exploded and there has been nothing done, not a thing. It is not just seniors and it is not just young children. But I can tell you I talked to a family physician in my district last week and they have kids – and I have heard from other Members in my caucus – lined up to see them because of mental health issues. And they are serious and they are real.

I'll tell you something else. Don't take my word for it, go to one of your schools and talk to a guidance counsellor, talk to the social workers at the school and ask what they have to say. I can tell you what they have to say. They are going to tell you we are failing our kids. We are failing them. Everyone in this House. Those children are supposed to be our future, and from a mental health aspect and what has happened over the last two years, we have done nothing. Yet, the minister seems to say everything is A-okay. Everything in not A-okay.

Now, forget COVID – forget COVID. Go to the financial state we are in. Now you tell me how those kids feel when they go home and mom and dad are fighting because they don't have enough money to put food on the table. You tell me how those kids feel when mom and dad say: I can't put you in hockey this year. I don't have the money to do it. Dad has been laid off. I don't have work. You tell me how those kids feel when someone can't afford to get gas to go drive a kid across the Island to play in a tournament. This is what's happening. Yet, everything is okay.

Between mental health, between our regular health care system and our financial situation, I can tell you what, it's seven years – there are not many new faces over there, there may be a new premier – that's three terms, seven years: nothing done.

Balance the budget in 2021; promised in '16, '17, '18, '19, now it's '25-'26. Do you know what? Everybody in this House can talk about Muskrat Falls, but Muskrat Falls was there in

'16 when the promise was made. It was there in '17. It was there in '18 and it was there in '19. Nothing has changed.

The only that has changed is the influx of money that this government has gotten because of COVID relief. They have actually won the lotto and they still couldn't get it right. Prior to the COVID relief, in March of 2020, the previous premier wrote a letter to the prime minister and said we are on the very crisis of collapse. We are on the cusp of collapse here in this province, prior to COVID.

So I have sat here and listened to COVID as the main excuse. It's not COVID. We were there long before COVID. People have short memories.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: If you're embarrassed about something maybe you should get up and say it there, Minister. Is it an embarrassment over failure or is it an embarrassment for something I'm saying? At the end of the day, while you're signing your greeting cards, if you are embarrassed by what I am saying, perhaps you should get up and say it to me. I didn't think so.

Our health care system has fallen apart and they have watched it. Yes, I agree 100 per cent with the Minister of Finance: it's absolutely embarrassing. One hundred per cent embarrassing. Because do you know why? The people that put us here deserve better. The people in this room deserve better. All I hear is: in Canada, in Saskatchewan, in Manitoba. We are worried about –

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: I hear the Minister of Transportation talking about leadership over there. I know you guys lack leadership and you're excited to see some. You will at some point, no doubt.

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: Yeah, I know you will.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: You don't know what the questions are, so certainly –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. LOVELESS: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: I'm speaking.

SPEAKER: I ask for order from both sides, not just you. I speak to all Members.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your protection.

Mr. Speaker, my point is quite simple. At the end of the day, as the health care crumbles, as people can't afford to live anymore, we sit back and we watch. We come in here and we present a budget that does nothing for anyone. It does nothing for anyone. Now, I'll agree that parts of it will help seniors, marginally; it will help certain aspects of the population, marginally. But, at the end of the day, there are too many missed opportunities.

The reality of it is we should be looking to delay the sugar tax. We should be looking for ways to reduce carbon tax, tax on gas and find ways to address the cost of living. We should be looking for home heat rebates. We should be looking for ways to help, not only the most vulnerable but everyone. Part of that comes with ways to reduce the cost of living and the other part is to get people the health care they need.

We don't have one crisis any more. We've got two major crises – two. And nobody is addressing them. This budget doesn't address them; there's no question about that. Anyone who thinks this budget addresses that stuff, they haven't paid any attention to it, I can guarantee you. The five-point plan, I can tell you, electric cars, the ability to switch from home heating oil to electricity, it doesn't work. It's not going to solve it for anyone. Because, at the end of the day, the people that need the most help can't afford electric cars and they certainly can't afford to switch.

I had a lady call me yesterday and she had a quote to switch from oil to electric. Guess how much? Twenty thousand dollars. So you're going to tell someone who's at the very lowest end of the totem pole, we're going to help you out now, we'll give you a \$5,000 rebate to switch from oil to electric. All you've got to do is come up with 15 grand. That's an easy fix. That'll look after you. When that's done, you're still going to pay \$400 or \$500 a month for electricity.

It's not a fix. It's not a solution. It's not anything. The reality of it is, is that most of the people who are living in houses with oil heat are probably renting them, which is even worse.

I cannot, in good conscience, support this budget. I can tell you right now, I will not. I'm with the Member for Harbour Main. I guarantee you there's nothing in this budget that makes any sense with regards to how it helps the cost of living.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

It is always a wonderful opportunity to be able to rise in this hon. House to speak on behalf of the residents of the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. It's good to be back here after a couple of weeks.

The last time I had the opportunity to speak in this House, Mr. Speaker, I spoke with respect to the budget on the blue-collared worker. Since that time, I've had dozens of people reach out to me, to thank me for standing up for the middle class, to bring their concerns forward, and that is what we need to do. Everyone needs to be represented here in this House and, of course, throughout our district.

Last evening, I had the opportunity to speak with a young couple from Torbay. When I was speaking with this couple I thought back to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board with respect to her Budget Speech. This

young couple, two professionals living here with their parents in a basement apartment, are moving out of province. As I was going through the conversation with them, again, I thought on the line in the Budget Speech, and I quote "This budget is about us. About what we all want to achieve – a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient, sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador." I couldn't agree more. I couldn't agree more.

I was overwhelmed with the thought of, not only this particular couple leaving our province but how many more couples are leaving. These are our young, educated, professional, innovative people that we are losing. I know the quote, it was said here yesterday: it's not about the amount of money that's in my pocket. It's about the amount of money that's being taken out of my pocket, with respect to the level of taxation and the cost of living here in our beautiful province.

So it caused me to think how many more young individuals are leaving our province – not only in my district, but in the 40 districts represented here. That is concerning, and as I said before, that is reality.

It's something that we are faced with. It's something that we have to make good, credible choices to keep people here. Right now, that one couple is just one couple, no doubt, but it leads you to think of how many more couples are in that same situation. We all know that the cost of living is increasing for everybody; it's a struggle. I spoke to a gentleman in Flat Rock, a senior, recently retired, and I asked, as anyone would do: How are you doing today? And his response to me was: I'm surviving.

Again, that hits home. Because he didn't respond with anything more positive than: I'm surviving. And we got into the conversation about the level of income that they have and what's required for them on a daily basis, on a monthly basis, with respect to the cost of living. We all heard about the cost of fuel, the cost of heating oil, the cost of goods and services, and it is – it's getting harder and harder each time when we look at what people have to face in order to live day to day.

That is the reality that we need to be faced with. When we look at the budget and what is there

and how it helps people – again, it was said earlier, a portion of our population has been positively affected by this. But not everyone, and I go back to the blue-collar worker. With that level of income, and they're working on a daily basis, trying to pay the bills and trying to survive, it comes back to us to make better decisions for all people of our province.

So I'm no different than any other MHA here; I know constituents are reaching out to you all the time. That's part of our job, is to listen to our constituents. And they're making choices on a daily basis that, you know what, perhaps they shouldn't have to be making. So I spoke to a small-business man in my district, operates an excavation company, has a truck, an excavator and he's etching out a living, no doubt about it. He's working hard; he's working hard for the dollars that he makes. But it's become increasingly more difficult for that gentleman – and he's only one of many – to make a go of his business.

When we think of what has to be done with respect to small business, with respect to people trying to survive, this couple back in Torbay, again, they said that their dollar will go a lot further outside of this province. That's a heavy statement. Their dollar will go a lot further outside of this province. So when we're looking at the budget, when we're looking at our level of taxation, when we're looking at the decisions that we are making here, that has to be in the forefront.

I'm not saying, Madam Minister, that you're not making and putting that effort into it. That's not what I'm here to stand and say today. What I am saying is that we, collectively, have to do better. We have to do better for our province, for all of our constituents, because we all have family members who are going to be affected. When we look at the many challenges, I'll go back to seniors with respect to that particular demographic and the level of affordable housing.

I never thought that it would be a difficult position in my district, in the District of Cape St. Francis, that affordable housing would be an issue. But it is increasingly becoming more and more evident that seniors cannot afford to live in their homes. That is clear with respect to the for

sale signs as you drive down Route 20 – not Route 66 – with respect to the homes that are for sale. It leads me to think on what they are having to do, the discussions that they are having to make and the sacrifices that they have to give in order to stay here. That, Speaker, is only a small demographic with respect to seniors who can't live in their homes, but that is making a big difference to them, to their families, to the communities as a whole.

When I look at that five towns in my district and the level of services that the municipalities have to provide and with people moving out, you have less of a tax base. With businesses who are not doing so well and may close up, you have less of a tax base to draw from. It is very concerning to me when I hear these instances in my district and I think of the choices that these individuals have to make, it causes me to wonder what else can we do. What better choices can we make, collectively, as 40 MHAs in this House? That is something that we need to keep first and foremost.

Mr. Speaker, it was mentioned earlier today that this is Mental Health Week. I think that needs to be recognized a bit more than what we are doing from May 2 to May 8. Good mental health, Mr. Speaker, has a positive effect on your physical health and, in return, good physical health has a positive effect on your mental health. That can't be said any clearer than that, with respect to mental health. I do know that we have many issues facing our health care system in our province – many issues. The Premier has stated, in this hon. House, that our health care system is broken. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you from the many doctors and nurses that live in my district, many of those who have reached out to me over the past number of weeks and months, who are pushed to the max with respect to the level of service that they have to provide in health care, they're burnt out. They are pushed to the max; they are overstressed.

One nurse did say to me a broken health care system leads to broken physicians and broken nurses. When you stop and think about that and you really digest it, these are the people that we are relying on when we're going to our health care centres, our emergency rooms. This is something that's unacceptable with respect to the level of care that we're at currently in our

province. I won't repeat what was said earlier with respect the seven years and the opportunities that had been here, but I can tell you that a solid platform is needed going forward.

I know that we've had the opportunity to speak with Sister Elizabeth Davis and Dr. Pat Parfrey on many occasions with respect to the Health Accord, and we all agree that the Health Accord is welcomed here in our province. But that's years out. That is years out that we're looking at this particular solution for our residents here in Newfoundland and Labrador. So we need something a lot sooner than that. We need something that's going to make a difference now, in addition to the Health Accord that's going to be coming down the pipe in at least several years.

So with respect to the level of health care that we have in our province, I spoke with a friend of mine in Stephenville Crossing who's coming into St. John's for cancer care. You just look at the amount of money that that couple, husband and wife, has to put out from coming from Stephenville Crossing to St. John's to stay here overnight, meals, gas. The prices are just through the roof. And that's on top of the stress that this couple is going through while one of the individuals is having cancer care.

I can't imagine having to travel across the Island for that. For me, I live 25 minutes outside of the tertiary care centre here in St. John's, and we unfortunately had to go through a time in our lives where that was needed as well with respect to cancer care. A cancelled appointment yesterday for my wife is stressful enough when you look at what you have to go through. But we were 25 minutes outside the city; we didn't have to travel across the province. All of these things make you stop and think of what can we do better to serve our residents. It's indeed overwhelming at times. This is not something that we take lightly, no doubt about it. It's overwhelming at times.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity over the last couple of months to do a bit of travelling across the province from time to time. Recently, we were in the beautiful District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. A beautiful district. You

won't find a pothole I can tell you that. Wonderful roads. What a Member.

I can tell you, I can only dream of having the same in my district. But I can tell you the people that we spoke with –

S. CROCKER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: The minister has a plan for this evening for the news. Not a problem.

The people that we spoke with in that district, Mr. Speaker, it's not all rosy, I can tell you that. We hear it in the 12 districts that we represent. I know that the government are hearing that as well in their districts. I know that. This is not a one-sided issue, but I can tell you the people that we met within Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, the quote that one young lady left me was: We are losing hope. We are losing hope, I say to the Member from the middle of St. John's.

That causes us great concern, when you're looking at the level of health care that's provided. We discussed the Carbonear hospital and what is going on there.

They must love what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. WALL: When we spoke about the Carbonear hospital and the level of care that's being provided there – of course, the doctors and the nurses or what's going to be coming from the Carbonear hospital – the quote that I was left with was, and I need you to listen to this: Carbonear hospital is not part of the problem, but it's definitely part of the solution.

S. CROCKER: I've been saying it forever.

J. WALL: I'm glad that the minister agrees with me. I do hope that the Minister of Health would listen as well. When it comes to the Carbonear hospital and the services that they provide not only to the people in that district, or that area, I can come from Pouch Cove to go to Carbonear General Hospital, not a problem.

So when government is looking at this, remember that is part of the solution, when you're looking at appointments that can be filled, some of the backlog or what have you. It's important to remember that level of commitment.

Speaker, I do know that I spoke with the municipalities in my district. They are concerned with the state of the province, with our economy. They are concerned with the cost of increases in municipal projects and tenders. When I listened to the Minister of Transportation, he says that the roads plan is coming out soon. I appreciate that. When we look at the level of money that is required to do the work throughout the province, again, it is something that is not going to be an easy fix and it won't be done overnight. But I do appreciate the level of concern that the municipalities have with respect to municipal projects, tenders and roadwork. I do just want to make that point known.

Mr. Speaker, I'll touch briefly on Volunteer Appreciation Week. All of our districts, I'm sure, had many, many functions for Volunteer Appreciation Week, as did mine. I just want to note with respect to some volunteers that were pointed out in my district.

So for the Town of Bauline we had two, we had Jackie Legrow and Megan Hibbs; in the Town of Pouch Cove we had Danny Connors; and in Flatrock, we had Brian and Corrina Martin. I have to give a shout-out to my constituency assistant who did attend that function for me; I was at another municipality.

She did share with the council that by her being there they got the better end of the bargain – never. Anyway, I'll just give a shout-out to my CA, Barb, for that and to Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, Michelle Hickey, Karen Youden Walsh, Rita Kennedy and Cole Inkpen.

All of these people are making a difference in my district and, of course, in the individual municipalities. So that has to be recognized when we are coming home –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you – for Volunteer Appreciation Week.

S. CROCKER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. I can't stop him.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: That's it. I appreciate that.

Speaker, with respect to Come Home Year, I am hearing from my residents in my district, from my municipalities that they are no doubt excited for Come Home Year. A lot of work has to be done and the Minister of Transportation knows that. We've had discussions.

A lot of work has to be done in order for us to celebrate Come Home Year, but I will give a shout-out to the municipalities – for the Town of Pouch Cove from July 14-24, the Town of Bauline from July 28-31 and the Town of Torbay from August 4-7. So if you are inclined and join me in my district for those particular times, please reach out to me and we can celebrate together.

Speaker, one thing before I leave, I think we need to recognize the Queen's 96th birthday. She's 96. I can tell you that in the Town of Bauline they're having a large celebration for that. I look forward to taking part with respect to the Town of Bauline and their residents in that as well.

Speaker, I will close by saying that I try to look for the positive. I do. Most times I do. I will say with respect to the cost of living and health care that I spoke on today with respect to the budget, we need to do more. We ought to do better. We have the residents of this province here as our responsibility. It's something that I take great pride in, representing the District of Cape St. Francis. I take very seriously the work that this honourable House does.

I know that there are times when there are things going back and forth. I realize that. But I do have to say that we need to do better when it comes to our residents, with the cost of living; we need to help them as they're going forward.

With respect to health care in our province, I'm looking forward to what's going to be coming from the Minister of Health with these conversations that we're going to be having with the Medical Association, the Nurses' Union, what have you. It is something that we all have to keep first and foremost.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate your time, your attention and especially the attention of all Members here.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I can understand why the Conservatives in my district are losing hope.

Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do recess until 6 p.m.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House stands recessed until 6 p.m.