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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!

Welcome everyone. Good afternoon.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Dennis Goodland. Dennis is the subject of a Member's statement this afternoon.

Welcome Dennis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I would like to welcome Alicia Mason-Quinton who is going to be recognized in the Ministerial Statement.

Welcome Alicia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Members.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia - St. Mary's, Humber - Bay of Islands, Mount Pearl - Southlands, Conception Bay East - Bell Island and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

On a September day in 1933, Catherine Linehan was born in North Harbour, St. Mary's Bay to Frank and Ida Power. She attended school in her tiny community until the age of 16, after which Catherine worked in St. John's as a nursing assistant at the Waterford Hospital.

She might have ended up with a long and storied nursing career, but instead she met and married Edward Linehan and moved to John's Pond to start their family. After her fifth child was born, and John's Pond was resettled, the family moved back to North Harbour. Catherine went on to have five more children.

Her life was riddled with many hardships, culminating in a tragedy in 1980 when the

family home was destroyed by fire and five of her children died: Barry, aged 10; Harold, 12; Sharon, 14; Richard, 19; and Francis, 21. The family rebuilt metres from where the children were laid to rest.

On May 1, Catherine returned to North Harbour for the launch of a book about her life, *If I Cry, I'll Fill the Ocean*, written by her daughter, Ida Linehan-Young, which is an account of the hardships, trials and tribulations she faced before and after her grievous loss.

Today, I honour Catherine Linehan.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Hedley John Saunders of Curling, who went to his place of rest on April 16 at almost the age of 98.

Hedley was born in Greenspond, Bonavista Bay. He was a kind, gentle man, who loved life and had a kind soul.

He spent many years fundraising for various organizations including the Autism Society, Bay of Islands search and rescue and Special Olympics, raising over \$100,000 for these charitable organizations.

For many years, in celebration of his birthdays, Hedley requested no presents for himself but requested donations be made to charities in recognition of his birthday.

After his last two daughters said their goodbyes, Hedley decided it was time to cross the rainbow. He had everything arranged for his funeral, including instructions that when he was being taken out of the church, he wanted everybody to celebrate his life by clapping and singing and, if you didn't, he would haunt you. I can assure you he got his wish.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in extending condolences to Hedley's two sons, eight daughters, three stepchildren, his

grandchildren and his great-grandchildren, his step-grandchildren, his step-great-grandchildren and extended family. I ask all Members to give a final hardy applause to his fine man.

Rest in Peace, Hedley.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This past week, communities throughout our province took the opportunity to reflect upon and formally celebrate the tremendous contribution that volunteers make in our society. Whether it be through volunteerism in our schools, faith community, service clubs, sports organizations, youth and seniors organizations, arts community, emergency services, or on an individual basis, we are truly blessed to have so many community-minded citizens in our province who are willing to step up to the plate whenever and wherever they are needed.

As I reflect on the volunteer activity in my district, I'm truly blown away by the tens of thousands of hours of time and talent that is given by our citizens each and every year.

This selfless contribution to our community is truly what makes Mount Pearl and the Southlands area such a wonderful place to live. No doubt, government has a significant role to play in shaping and guiding our society, but they can only do so much. So I ask: Where would we be without our volunteers?

I would ask all hon. Members to reflect on that question and please join me in recognizing the tremendous role that volunteers play throughout our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand today to acknowledge the passing of a constituent from my district, the late Michael Laurie. Mike was a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle. A former Royal Canadian Air Force member, a former member of the RCMP, a former member of the RNC, a lawyer and supporter of the communities he called home as a municipal elected leader.

A graduate of a number of universities across the country, Mike took great pride in education. Mike was a man that you knew where he stood on every issue and who was very positive, passionate and engaged about the province and the potential of its citizens. He would challenge everyone who worked for him to give an honest effort and he would reward them handsomely.

He loved working on his farm and his garden; it was the one thing that relaxed him. Myself and Mike had many a debate about politics and society and may have had different views, but we always respected each other's opinion. Mike did much more for people than people realize.

Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in passing on our condolences to his wife, Alexa, and his family.

Rest in peace my friend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is an honour to celebrate the exemplary service to country of Bonavista's native son, Dennis Goodland. Dennis, one of our own esteemed security detail here at Confederation Building, served 30 years in the Canadian Forces with three tours of duty in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2007.

Dennis, like his grandfather before him, Oliver Goodland who served in World War I, joined the military at the age of 20. Oliver served in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and was awarded the military Medal of Bravery in the field serving as a runner.

In January 2002, Dennis was deployed to Afghanistan and spent several years of his life making a difference in that troubled land, rebuilding schools, installing wells, building roads and the very memorable occasion of providing treats to children. Dennis served as a sergeant in charge of a unit of six soldiers and created lifelong friendships with other Canadian and American soldiers.

Unfortunately, he experienced tragedy as well, with many colleagues paying the ultimate sacrifice. There were far too many ramp ceremonies to repatriate fallen soldiers, Dennis has stated. The soldiers, like Dennis, made a huge difference.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the outstanding service of our House of Assembly's own Dennis Goodland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Speaker.

It is a pleasure to recognize in the House today the winners and participants of the inaugural Newfoundland and Labrador High School Short Film Festival 2022.

The NL High School Short Film Festival is a place for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to creatively express themselves through film.

Awards were presented to almost 30 filmmakers from Grades 7 through 12 across the province. The grand prize, the Premier's Short Film Award of Excellence, was presented to Alicia Mason-Quinton of Holy Heart of Mary High School for her film *Young at Heart*. Alicia shared her family's relationship with dementia, highlighting the positive sides of her relationship with her grandparents that often are not mentioned when discussing this affliction. A full list of winners are online.

Speaker, I would be remiss to discuss this festival without mentioning Allan Hawco and Paul Pope, who helped create the festival for these awards. There was no bigger advocate for filmmakers young and old in this province than Mr. Pope. His recent, untimely passing is felt deeply, especially amongst his colleagues in the film industry. His legacy will live on though for years to come, particularly as he spearheaded the recently announced Film and Media Production Centre at College of the North Atlantic.

Speaker, I ask all Members of the Legislature to please join me in congratulating this year's 28 Short Film Festival award winners. They are all shining examples of young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians creatively expressing themselves through film. I cannot wait to see what they produce in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Speaker, all Members on this side of the House join me in congratulating all participants and winners in the inaugural Newfoundland and Labrador High School Short Film Festival.

Speaker, as the minister notes, our province produced award-winning, internationally acclaimed filmmakers. This festival is a wonderful opportunity to get in the schools and foster the creativity and passion among the next generation of filmmakers who will, no doubt, bring our province to the next level.

A special congratulations to the overall winner, Alicia Mason-Quinton, of Holy Heart of Mary High School, who addressed the difficult issue of dementia in a family, as a lot of us are familiar with.

Lastly, I note and share the minister's comments on the life and career of Paul Pope who recently passed away. Perhaps, Speaker, the festival

could be named after Mr. Pope, whose life's work will long cast a shadow over the filmmaking industry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and we also take this moment to commemorate the work and legacy of Paul Pope.

As we congratulate these 28 award recipients, especially Alicia Mason-Quinton, let us take a moment to recognize what a difference government support to education can make in the lives of students. And we urge government to invest further in adequate supports for our newly arriving students so that they too will be one day able to develop their talents fully and to thrive in our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Today is Red Dress day across Canada – a solemn day of commemoration to the memories of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls lost in violence. Intergenerational trauma experienced by our Indigenous population continues to ripple today. Indigenous women and girls still face violence in our community. It has to end.

I ask the Premier: What is this government doing to end violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

And thank you for that important question from the Member opposite. We all recognize and I think we all should recognize the importance of today and the significance that it plays in the social fabric of who we are as a people, Mr. Speaker.

This government has recognized that it is important for us all to ensure that we are doing everything we can to prevent violence against women across cultures but, in particular, in the Indigenous communities. It is something we talk about frequently on the weekly Indigenous calls, Mr. Speaker, and this government is committing to doing everything we possibly can to end such actions, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We agree. There has to be not only talk, there has to be programs, services, investments and education to ensure that these women and girls are protected.

Last night in Estimates we uncovered that while the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are faced to pay more than just the cost of living, the Liberal budget gave their own Premier extra money for staff and travel costs.

Why did the Premier feel it was important to increase spending in his own office while Newfoundlanders and Labradorians struggle to afford home heating fuel, gasoline and groceries?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

And, of course, we know that my office is spending less than real money compared to 2014 under Premier Marshall. So it is important to continue to invest in travel and to ensure that the relationships are built to get good returns on investments, like a \$5.2-billion deal to mitigate rates across the province, Mr. Speaker. I won't apologize for that. I don't think the people of the province should expect me to apologize for doing good business with our federal partners, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, we're not asking the Premier to apologize, what we're asking for is to be frugal with the money that is owned by the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: – and while they're struggling, he should set an example and do the same.

The Premier will spend \$155,000 more on staff for his political office in Central Newfoundland, but he's also increased the budget for his own transportation costs.

I ask the Premier: How much more money have you given your office to subsidize your travel expenses, and how much would it cost to have a monthly Zoom account to talk to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

Once again, I suggest that this is a good investment – building relationships to ensure that we're getting valuable returns for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. An example of that, like I pointed out, is the \$5.2-billion rate mitigation deal. Another example, of course, the Members opposite were shouting that I deliver on Bay du Nord. Guess what? That travel

returned a deliverance of Bay du Nord to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: I have to remind the Premier, it was a lot of other people who had input in to make sure that Bay du Nord was a project that went forward, I guarantee you that, in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: The Liberals have not given one cent to the people in this province to offset the rising costs of gasoline – not one cent, Mr. Speaker. Yet, the Premier plans to spend \$79,000 more on travel this year compared to last year. That's a lot of travel paid by the taxpayers.

Is it fair that the Premier has been given extra money to offset the rising costs of fuel while people can't afford to drive to work or their medical appointments?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

Of course, \$142 million is a lot of pennies, a lot of cents towards the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite proud of the Minister of Finance in making sure that they are giving back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, with respect to travel, of course, the Member opposite is anchoring this debate in an incorrect position. The cost of travel last year, during COVID, that's an unfair comparison, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that the cost of travel that we are assuming right now is relevant to the people of the province. It's one that we're prudent with, and it's one that we've already shown in a short period of time that we're delivering results on, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

We, in this House, have to set an example. We have to set the bar. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador here are making sacrifices; we have to do the same here. We have to be frugal with the taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, we're nearing the six-month review period for the government's policy on vaccination. Can the Premier update this House on this review and whether any changes to the existing policy are being considered?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

In terms of vaccination for staff in health care facilities, the situation is revised on a regular basis, based on the science from NACI and the input from Public Health. Currently, there is discussion about further boosters, but, as yet, those are reserved for our vulnerable and elderly and not directly for staff. As soon as there are any changes contemplated, we would obviously let the workers and the public know.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, as we know this is Mental Health Week and a story in today's media provides an illustration of a serious situation which exists at Her Majesty's Penitentiary regarding the great need for enhanced mental health services. It's commonly stated that prison is not only a place you go to, but a place you come from.

I ask the minister: What steps are being taken to address serious mental health issues in Her Majesty's Penitentiary? Why is it that individuals are returning to our society worse off when their sentences are completed?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was recognized, prior to and certainly as part of *Towards Recovery*, that mental health as well as physical health in Corrections was better located within the health care system rather than within the penitentiary system.

We have worked diligently to bring those services into Eastern Health in the first instance, as far as HMP is concerned. Those are under way. We have a director of health in Corrections and Eastern Health has done a gap analysis to see what services need to be supplied that currently aren't.

As soon as we have done some more diligent work around recruiting, which we have addressed in a separate forum, we'll be in a better position to provide those services, which are indeed needed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, not enough is being done now. I ask the minister to commit today to immediate attention being given now and not wait for a new prison to be built.

Surely the minister has to agree that individuals, correctional officers, their families, victims and society at large can no longer wait for mental health supports in HMP.

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Eastern Health are not waiting for further recruitment; they have actually supplied additional resources to HMP in terms of counselling services. We are in the process of taking over the counselling contracts that exist with psychologists and physicians from Justice

and Public Safety and, as I said, Eastern Health is looking to see how those need to be enhanced. We have taken steps and we will continue to build on that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday afternoon in this House we presented a PMR, which the Liberal government amended and, much to our relief, they have actually amended it in a very positive way. We were very glad to support it. But it also called for an introduction; they recognized there wasn't enough in the budget and they actually said they voted to introduce immediate relief measures to address the cost of living.

I ask the minister: When will you amend the budget to include further cost of living measures?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm happy to say that yesterday in this House of Assembly the Members opposite voted to support the government's efforts to provide immediate relief measures, including but not limited to those outlined in *Budget 2022*, which include financial relief along with the measures – and I'm reading directly from the resolution.

So I thank the Members opposite for their support for the financial measures; \$142 million is being returned to the people of the province. Money in their pockets to address the cost of living.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I am so glad the minister quoted from the resolution, because I want to do exactly the same thing because the key words the minister just read out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

T. WAKEHAM: – the key words the minister just read out: but not limited to. That implies we're going to have more.

So I ask the minister: When will we see more relief for gas taxes? When will we see more relief for home heating fuel?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: The responsible thing that this government does, that this Liberal government does is ensures that we are always monitoring our financial situation and the financial health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Of course, we will continue to monitor the situation and as funds are available we'll return them to the people of the province.

The Member opposite likes to talk about the home heat rebate program that they had under their administration back in 2014-2015. Allow me to advise the Member opposite and the people of the province that the home heat rebate and the HST rebate back in 2014-2015 was worth \$60 million. Today, it is \$134 million, double the amount that we are returning to the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'd like to remind the minister that the cost of home heating fuel back then was 70 cents a litre. It is three times that now so there is a big difference: You need three times as much money.

Speaker, last night in Estimates we learned that \$4.4 million has been spent on the Rothschild report.

I ask the minister: Who exactly is reviewing the Rothschild report and are you planning on spending more money on the Rothschild in a future effort?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

As we have said in this House and have said publicly, the Rothschild report is the first time in the province's history we have had a thorough review of the assets that are held by government on behalf of the people of the province. We want to make sure that we are maximizing the value of those assets and returning that money to develop –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: Again, a respectful workplace is hard in this House.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I heard the question; I want to hear the answer.

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

S. COADY: Thank you for your respect, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that, as we have said back in December, when we first announced the Rothschild report and again updated the people of the province, that we're looking at a phased approach here. Phase one: we did the full review of the Rothschild report and now we're looking at the results of that report. Should we make the determination that we are moving forward, there would be a phase two.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's concerning that we're talking about phase one and then potentially phase two, which all involve more spending of taxpayers' money with all these reports being secretive.

When will the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador hear from their government about what's in this report and what action they plan on taking to sell off the assets of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

S. COADY: Speaker, it is too bad further due diligence and external due diligence wasn't done on other projects, such as the Muskrat Falls (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: If it had been done, it would have been known that the project was not in the best interest of the people of the province.

I will say that we have received the Rothschild report, that we have a team of people within government and across government that are reviewing that report. There will be determinations as how best to proceed from here.

It is reassuring to the people of the province that we are doing the due diligence and work to make sure that any assets that are held on behalf of the people of the province are being exercised to their fullest potential and making sure that they return the investments that are required by the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, Saturday past, I heard from residents at two public meetings in the District of Bonavista about the budget: one in Lethbridge and one in Bonavista. It was clear from the people that the cost of living is a huge

concern and that government has not done enough.

One senior, a widower from Bonavista, who continues to dedicate her time towards humanitarian causes in the region, told me that it costs her almost \$2,200 to fill up her oil tank, and she simply does not have the money and is concerned that there is no end in sight.

I ask the minister: What does she say to the senior from Bonavista who is struggling to heat her home?

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

S. COADY: This is extremely difficult on the people of the province, and we're very concerned about the rising cost of living, as people across Canada and around the world are concerned. We're seeing what's happening with inflation; we're seeing what's happening with the price of fuel. This is very, very difficult. That's why we did allocate \$142 million to return to the people of the province to help.

We'd love to do more, Speaker. We would, of course, like to do more, but the people of the province realize that we're actually borrowing money in order to return money, and that's very, very difficult on future generations.

I will say to the Member opposite, we're going to continue to try and support the people of the province as best we can. The \$142 million and the increases that we've made to the Seniors' Benefit and the Income Supplement help. We recognize it won't fix it all.

SPEAKER: The time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, these are real examples from the people in the District of Bonavista. I would ask that maybe it's time to revisit what we're doing and just to know that there are people out there who are hurting.

Speaker, another senior said – quote – makes no wonder our health care is in the mess it is in, and went on to say that people are getting sick because of the stresses they are under, in juggling medical bills, heat bills, food bills and gas. Speaker, this senior wants to know why government did not adequately address the soaring cost of living in its budget.

I ask the minister: What does she say to this senior?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, it is very, very difficult on people. Everyone recognizes how challenging it is, and that's why we had balance within the budget. We returned \$142 million to the people of the province. We made sure we increased the Seniors' Benefit. We made sure we increased the Income Supplement. We tried to help everyone in the province.

We touched just about everyone in the province by returning money to them. Is there more we can do into the future? It depends on how the economy is and how monies are received by government, but we certainly look to continue to support the people of the province. We have more than doubled the amount of money that we're returning to the people of the province in just the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit, Speaker, and we're going to continue to look to see what we can do.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

The snow crab trip limits have been imposed on inshore crab fishermen. We know crab fishing is a dangerous job, and fishers are expressing concern about more time on the water. This new measure comes when the rising cost of fuel puts additional pressure on inshore crab fishermen who must make additional trips.

We ask the minister: What is your position on trip limits in the fishery?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, and it's always a great opportunity to talk about the fishery and right now crab is king on the Northeast Coast and I guess around the coasts of this province.

Trip limits have been imposed for the production part of the industry, so we can't possibly produce 111 million pounds of crab in a week, so we need to spread it out. The season is from now, early April until mid-July. We have ample time to catch it.

We're going to have a month in which plants would struggle, but if we brought it all in at the one time the product would rot on the wharf, thus nobody would get any money out and the industry would be destroyed. Last year was a billion-dollar industry thanks to crab. The proper management of crab, the proper way to deal with it and bring it in has to be supported.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All they're looking at is to get out and get their crab and get in as quickly as they can, not spend extra time out there, Minister.

Speaker, MyGovNL has been offline for days with no explanation from the minister about what happened. Was there a cyberattack or a security breach?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

On Monday of this week, we were aware that there was a MyGovNL outage. And just to let the members of the public know, maybe five or six months ago we kind of upgraded our

platform to a more secure platform which allowed us to expand functionality, so we signed an agreement with a new vendor.

So unfortunately, the vendor is having some issues at the moment. It's completely unacceptable. I spoke with them yesterday. There's absolutely no cyberattack; there's nothing at risk. It's a technical issue with the design of our new build and we have our best OCIO experts working with the company to resolve it as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, MyGovNL stores tens of thousands of personal records, including MCP and driver's licence numbers. Has any information been compromised as a result of that?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Absolutely no information has been compromised. We're having a technical error with the company – the platform that built the new MyGovNL. There's no risk of any data whatsoever. Our experts are working with the company to resolve the MyGovNL online services as soon as possible.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Minister, you'd think they could make a press release to let the people know that it's down and that it's not a cyberattack. People are trying to get in and they spent two or three days, so it's certainly something you should do. Speaker, as a result of the closure, there have been appointments cancelled which risk more backlog.

I ask the minister: Will motor vehicle registration be open this weekend to help accommodate people who are affected by the outage?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

We've issued multiple press releases about the MyGovNL outage, we've posted on our social media and it's been on the local news outlets as well. So we have been communicating it; I do apologize to residents of the province for the inconvenience.

We have added phone numbers to MRD and MCP, for example, to our website, and we've augmented staff and moved them around to make sure that residents are able to get through on the phone lines. This morning we had a three-minute wait at MRD to get on the phone, Mr. Speaker. So we are trying our best to help accommodate all residents of the province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, according to the most recent Canadian Cancer Society report, our province is expected to have the highest rate of cancer for women in the country. The report points to the lack of screening, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.

What is government's plan to deal with this crisis?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Certainly from the point of view of screening activities, COVID has had an impact on diagnostic services and screening services. We, through the regional health authorities, are endeavouring to address that. There is a plan.

The issue around cancers of all kind, let alone gender-specific ones, is close to my heart from my previous career and I was involved in the original setting up of the colon cancer project here.

From our point of view, there is a backlog and this will be addressed as part of our task force with the procedural physicians.

Thank you.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

That's all good, but people are dying – people are dying. Speaker, mortality rates for colorectal cancer and stomach cancer are the highest – this didn't just happen yesterday – the highest in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What is government's plan to address this critical issue?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've said in response to other questions that we have – various governments over decades – spent a fortune doubling if not trebling the amount of money that's gone into the health care system. And we have seen little or nothing in the way of benefit in terms of measurable outcomes. That is why we, the Premier and I, commissioned Health Accord NL. It is time to stop thinking in old ways, and it is time to – in the words of the Accord – reimagine health care.

We start with the determinants of health at a young age and by making healthy children, healthy youth, we will make healthy adults. We need to address on the back end the treatment issues, and we are working through those with Quality of Care NL and this will make a difference. It did not happen overnight; it will not be fixed overnight, but we're working on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It is interesting the minister mentioned other provinces not having measurable results. So let's talk about British Columbia. British Columbia has almost fully cleared their COVID-19 surgical backlog.

Speaker, why can other provinces like British Columbia hire more staff, add additional operating time while this government is just now beginning to meet with health professionals via a task force to address this crucial issue?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Wait-list management has been part of a clinician's role for decades. We have and continue to support the NLMA and others in wait-list management. We are not alone in this problem. There are 35,000 individuals in Regina who are waiting for surgical procedures. There are one million British Columbians without access to primary care; 25 per cent of Quebecers have no regular primary care; 25 per cent of ICU nurses in Alberta have left, Mr. Speaker.

We have a plan, we are working through it and we will make progress.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, cervical cancer screening in Central Newfoundland remains a challenge that is only getting worse, according to local physicians.

I ask the minister: How can the people of Central Newfoundland be sure they can access cervical cancer screening when they need it?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I know from personal knowledge that Central Health, for example, now runs nurse practitioner-led Pap smear clinics. Those are widely advertised through Central Health. They may not be in your particular community, but they are accessible.

The answer to cervical cancer long term was completely addressed by HPV vaccination. This province instituted HPV vaccination in schools for girls. This government brought it in for boys. That's the answer for the next generation. It will disappear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

In a guest column in the March 21, 2022, edition of *The Telegram*, Bridget Clarke, an advocacy coordinator for the St. John's Status of Women, states: "In line with the 2004 federal task force and national experts, the St. John's Status of Women Council recognizes that pay equity is a fundamental human right."

I ask the Premier: Does he agree with this statement?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member, of course, for this question.

I will again express my pleasure in the attention that these issues are getting this sitting. I think it's well deserved and it's long overdue.

I think it's safe to say that we're all on the same page here when it comes to the matter of pay equity legislation both in public and private sector. It's something, of course, that we all want to see happen. I'm happy to say that we do have reactive pay equity legislation in place, of course. This is made possible through the *Labour Standards Act*, as well as the Human Rights, which is a recourse if anybody feels that

they are being discriminated against because of their gender, they can certainly use this channel.

We're committed to doing much more than simply just pay equity but, again, it's the concrete steps that we're taking such as investments in venture capitals for women and gender-diverse people, child care and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I would say that advocates would only hope that the minister is giving the attention to it that they want to see.

Ms. Clarke goes on to say: "To further deny or delay proactive legislation is to infringe on the human rights of many women and marginalized workers in Newfoundland and Labrador."

Does the Premier agree that further delaying pay equity legislation is an infringement on the rights of women and marginalized workers?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the hon. Member. To his comment earlier, absolutely, it's something that I personally give attention to daily with my staff, my team. We are a small team but a mighty team in the Office of Women and Gender Equality. I will say that every one of those women and gender-diverse people in my department work hard every day to reach out and communicate with members of communities, stakeholders such as the St. John's Status of Women.

A very important topic, and we're doing everything that we can every day to advance all matters pertaining to women and gender-diverse individuals across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Speaker, the executive director of Planned Parenthood is quoted in the media today saying that access to abortion services here is pitiful at best and, in Labrador, there is virtually no access to abortion services.

I ask the Premier: What action is being taken by this government to ensure that all residents have equal access to safe abortion services?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you for the question.

It's an important topic; reproductive rights for women are a crucial key of reproductive health. From the point of view of abortion services, we have stabilized and secured the funding for the Athena centre, which, for several decades, has provided this service across the province.

With that, we're looking forward to working with them to address what gaps there are in the service, and we recognize that Labrador is a challenge. We need to recruit interested primary care providers to provide that service much more closer to home and that is part of an effort the department will continue to pursue.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Rights but no, or limited, access.

Planned Parenthood is asking the government to provide abortion services in hospitals run by the four regional health authorities. Having these services in hospitals throughout the province would make care safer and more accessible for women in this province.

I ask the minister: Will he look into this request?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Historically there was a provision of abortion services, principally at hospitals, then the Athena Health Centre came on and that resolved significant amount of the access issues. Currently only 10 per cent of terminations occur in a hospital setting and that is usually simply for medical reasons.

With the advent of Mifegymiso, which we added at no cost to the formulary for all Newfoundland and Labrador residents, that has made medical termination a viable option and, indeed, that is now how 50 per cent of this province's terminations occur. We will leave how those procedures are performed and where to the clinicians and will continue to work with them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Access To Information And Protection Of Privacy Act, 2015, Bill 59.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that the

House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 9, 2022.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 10, 2022.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Whereas there have been numerous concerns raised by inmates, family members, correctional employees and many members of the general public regarding the supports for mental health and addictions at Her Majesty's Penitentiary, which are woefully inadequate.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To immediately provide more access to counselling and treatment programs for mental health and addictions in Her Majesty's Penitentiary.

Furthermore, until the new prison is constructed and operational, devise an immediate plan of action to implement new ways for inmates to obtain the appropriate mental health and addiction supports they require to live as fully functional and respected citizens of society.

Speaker, I've mentioned before and it needs to be repeated: Prison is not only a place you go to, but a place you come from. Why is that

important? It's important, Speaker, because individuals that go into prison come back into our society. When they go in, they may be suffering mental health issues, so it's an opportunity for the overall benefit of society. We need to ensure that there are proper mental health diagnoses and that there are subsequent treatments for individuals who are in these institutions.

We know that the penitentiary is housed with so many individuals that have mental health issues. Whether it's PTSD, whether it's fetal alcohol syndrome, whether it's ADHD, we know that there are serious problems in there and people that are in there suffering from these mental health disorders need to get the proper treatment and the proper supports, and that's not happening now. We have to look at what's important here. It's about recidivism; it's about repeat offenders. These individuals come back into our society. So, surely, it's in our best interest to ensure that they are treated properly when they're in the jail system, in the penitentiary. That is the way that we will protect our society in the long run is if we ensure that they're rehabilitated, and that's not happening now.

Speaker, we know that there needs to be more access to treatment programs. There needs to be supportive counselling. There needs to be addiction counselling. There needs to be educational programs. We know that there are some there; we're not disputing that, and they have important value, but they clearly need to be enhanced. We saw the story today, in the media, about the father with his son; they're pleading for help. He didn't get the help in the mental health system in the penitentiary.

So, Speaker, we need to address this important issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for this petition is that senior accessible housing and home care services in Labrador West is steadily increasing. Lifelong residents of the region are facing the possibility of needing to leave their home in order to live or receive adequate care. Additional housing options including assisted living facilities, like those found throughout the rest of the province for seniors, have become a requirement for Labrador West.

So the petition is:

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; and

WHEREAS the means for increasing the number of senior residences in Labrador West to happily age in place are not currently in that 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.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Labrador and I would say my mom who is there, who is a senior, would be a pioneer for that region. I mentioned here in the House a few weeks ago my situation with my dad when he passed away in care. They were moving him to a Level 3 facility and what that meant was that he would leave Labrador West and have to go to St. Anthony or Goose Bay. To put it quite frankly, to travel from Labrador, as a senior or any member of a family, certainly in the middle of the winter, 500 kilometres over a road or a flight to St. Anthony, it's just unacceptable.

Labrador West has contributed to this province in a way that I believe gets overlooked very frequently. Between Wabush Mines which is now Tacora, IOC, the amount of tax money from the people working there, they have contributed substantially to this province. Yet, the people that live there don't get the level of care they require.

Right now there is a movement in Labrador West; it is called We Are All Cheryl Hardy. Well, everyone in this room is Cheryl Hardy. Cheryl Hardy is in a hospital. She requires Level 3 care. Her daughter has moved back from Ontario, sacrificed her own job in order to try and help and they are trying to move Cheryl out of Labrador West into a Level 3 facility. There needs to be something for these people.

It is quite simple. Government, I urge the Premier, I urge the minister to reach out to the people of Labrador West, to talk to Angela Hardy, to understand that you need to pay home care workers more money in order to get them because of the competition with the mines; to understand that if a home care worker is to go in there and work then they have to be subsidized at a higher rate because, guess what? It is more expensive to get people to work there. It's more expensive to offer the services.

There are solutions. This government can provide them. They are not looking for them. They can talk to any home care provider. They are willing to go in there. They just can't afford to do it. They cannot afford to build a home in there and it is not because people don't need it. It's because government doesn't subsidize in the same way. It's not Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to the people of Labrador West. They need to talk to them. I urge the Premier and I urge the minister to reach out to the Hardy family and I urge them to reconsider moving her from that hospital.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that residents of our Northern Labrador communities of Postville have access to adequate health care.

The community of Postville, Labrador has only one Labrador-Grenfell nursing position in Postville at a single community clinic. So one nurse, one clinic. This means that there is only one clinic nurse physically present in the community. This nurse does not have access to RCMP support services during a medical emergency because the community does not have RCMP stationed in their community.

The community of Postville is isolated, with no road access to the outside world. The only means of year-round transportation is by aircraft. Often, inclement weather prevents air services, including medevac – which is medical evacuation services – from getting to Postville. Also, if the lone nurse becomes ill and inclement weather prevents nursing relief from reaching the community, Postville will be without a nurse.

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 ensure the community of Postville has adequate health care in the form of two clinic nurses stationed in the community.

Now, Speaker, this is about access. This is about access to essential medical services. Postville is at risk of having no nurse present if the nurse gets sick, if anything happens, if she's already on a call-out. Also, access to RCMP supports – most people think about RCMP as law enforcement. But, in actual fact, the RCMP in a community provides additional professional supports. For example, if the nurse was involved in a vehicle collision such as an ATV or a snowmobile or a fire where she needed additional resources and supports basically what would happen is people would suffer and people may even die.

But this goes back to what I talk about. We don't actually have the same level of access to supports and infrastructure that other communities have. It's so important, Speaker.

So, in actual fact, the mental health toll that this takes on the citizens, including the AngajukKâk of Postville, is great. During COVID, there was a lot of stress. In actual fact, there have been times when the nurse has been called out at

night, worked through the night, and then has to go to work in the morning.

I want to point out now something that's happened in Postville, actually. A couple of years ago, a family friend was suffering a heart attack. Instead of being medevaced from Postville directly to the hospital in Happy Valley-Goose Bay –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

This might very well be the first petition on this topic in the House of Assembly, but maybe not. At least in my three years, this is the first.

There is a desire of the Newfoundland Pony Society and individuals within the District of Bonavista to grow the population of our native Newfoundland pony. This historic, stately animal, once a staple for hard-working Newfoundlanders, has seen its numbers greatly diminished over the years. To facilitate the collective desire to grow the population provincially, the assistance of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is desired in making Crown land available for Newfoundland pony ventures.

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 permit Crown land to be used for viable Newfoundland pony ventures and thus enhancing the impact of tourism and culture in regions such as the District of Bonavista.

I attended the Newfoundland Pony AGM in 2021 with President Jack Harris. The current Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture addressed the society and did a good job with that. When he left and went off on his Zoom, President Jack Harris had stated that the Newfoundland government had seen making lands available for Newfoundland ponies. In fact, he had said they were pony friendly for

such ventures. But the minister may speak to it in a short time just to confirm.

We have a young couple in Bunyan's Cove, started out with one horse last year. This year, they will have four Newfoundland ponies in Bunyan's Cove and myself and them realize the potential for tourism and the attraction it would be in the District of Bonavista.

The Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels can probably talk a little bit about Change Islands, which I have never visited but I hear a lot about. I am sure we get tourists going to Change Islands to see the Newfoundland ponies. I know that we have in Carbonear as well, in the House Leader's district, one coming up. We'd like to be able to have the same opportunity in the District of Bonavista.

These were stately animals that roamed freely in Newfoundland and Labrador once upon a time. I'm not sure now about them roaming freely back in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it would be sure nice to see them in our areas and see them in the District of Bonavista. I look forward to hearing from the minister.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I can't see the minister. I don't think he is responding.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: No, I'm going to respond, Mr. Speaker, because I think the minister had the opportunity to meet with them and we sort of had a little debate to see who was going to respond because I wanted to respond (inaudible)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader for a response.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree with the Member opposite more. The Newfoundland pony has an awesome place in our history. I look forward to actually probably having a little sidebar on it later because I think there may be even

something here that we can do as a part of our Come Home Year. Because I tell you, one of the exciting projects that we have coming this year for Come Home Year is we actually have a Newfoundland breed dog show and talking about our heritage of dogs. This is going to take place in Harbour Grace, I think, in late August. And we're going to show Newfoundland and Labrador dogs. It's an important part of our history.

I can tell you, from our Come Home Year committee and I think we talked about Mr. Paul Pope here earlier today. Paul was a Member of our Come Home Year host committee. One of the things that he wanted to see in one of our first meetings was some type of link this summer to our history when it comes to our dogs. And very happy that we're going to do that. I look forward to the opportunities that the Newfoundland pony certainly brings as well, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Speaker, I call Order 4, third reading of Bill 53.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 53, An Act To Amend The Judicature Act, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Judicature Act. (Bill 53)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Judicature Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 53)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper Order 3, third reading of Bill 44.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 44, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991, be now read a third time.

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

Seeing no speakers, 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.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991. (Bill 44)

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

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 44)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, Motion 5.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: WHEREAS subsection 6(3) of the *Independent Appointments Commission Act* provides that five members are to be appointed to the Independent Appointments Commission by Lieutenant-Governor in Council on the resolution of the House of Assembly; and

WHEREAS subsection 6(4) of the act provides that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council designate one of the members of the commission to be chairperson; and

WHEREAS subsection 7(1) of the act states that the commissioner may be reappointed for one additional three-year term to be served consecutively; and

WHEREAS the terms of the following members have expired:

Earl Ludlow, Chairperson
Cathy Duke

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the following persons be reappointed as members of the Independent Appointments Commission for a term of three years:

Earl Ludlow, Chairperson
Cathy Duke

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Government House Leader.

Today I am proud to highlight two individuals whom we hope will receive unanimous consent of this hon. House for reappointment to the Independent Appointments Commission.

Speaker, the *Independent Appointments Commission Act* was the government’s inaugural legislation back in 2016, and through this act our province has been the most accessible and open appointment process for agencies, boards and commissions in the country, I would argue.

The Independent Appointments Commission is an independent, non-partisan body that has the responsibility to apply a merit-based process to recommend qualified individuals for appointments. In 2017 we made changes to the Independent Appointments Commission to expand the roster of commissioners to a minimum of five and a maximum of seven.

On March 14, 2019, we made two new appointments to bring the Independent Appointments Commission up to seven members with the appointments of Mr. Earl Ludlow and Ms. Cathy Duke. Mr. Ludlow and Ms. Duke advised me that they are open to continuing on, if we would consider reappointing them.

Their incredible professionalism and dedication to the Independent Appointments Commission is unquestioned. It’s proven by the fact that Mr. Ludlow and Ms. Duke have agreed to accept a reappointment, thus allowing us the time needed to undertake recruitment for additional members. This is a recommendation of Mr. Earl Ludlow, who this House appointed to the Independent Appointments Commission, unanimously, as chair.

His career with the Fortis Group spans nearly 40 years. He has an extensive career as a community volunteer. He served two terms on Memorial University’s Board of Regents and two terms as the honorary lieutenant colonel of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment 1st Battalion.

In 2018, through a recommendation of the Independent Appointments Commission, Mr.

Ludlow was appointed to The Rooms board of directors. He is a member of the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador and a member of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. He has also been inducted in the Atlantic Province's CEO Business Hall of Fame by *atlantic BUSINESS* magazine, was designated as the Humanitarian of the Year by the Canadian Red Cross in 2010 and is a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Engineering. Mr. Ludlow earned his Bachelor of Engineering, Electrical in 1980 and a Master of Business Administration from Memorial University in 1994.

Cathy Duke is currently the chief executive officer of Destination St. John's where she directs sales and marketing efforts in attracting meetings, conventions, travel leisure and sport tourism. She previously served as deputy minister with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in the department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, as well as the department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development.

Ms. Duke has served as the vice-chair of the Independent Appointments Commission since 2019. She also serves on the Memorial University Board of Regents. She has also served as vice-chair of the Stella Burry Foundation. These are highly reputable people. Ms. Duke earned a Bachelor of Social Work in 1979, a Master of Business Administration in 1982 and acquired her director designation for the Institute of Corporate Directors in 2017.

Speaker, I believe all Members of this House will agree that these candidates are more than qualified for the roles that they will undertake. I look forward to the continued success of the Independent Appointments Commission as they ensure positions within our agencies, boards and commissions are filled with qualified candidates.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any other speakers to the resolution?

Any other speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

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: Any speakers to the motion?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, it's an honour to stand in this House and speak to the budget. This is my third opportunity; I had an opportunity on the main motion. I'll just explain for those who may be watching at home. The main motion is the motion on the budget itself: what has been debated, what is continuing to be debated in Estimates and through the course of the last couple of weeks and will continue for the next couple of weeks. Then the process that's been put forward by us in the Official Opposition, our amendments.

We put an amendment to the budget and had some debate around that relevant to what we felt was missing in the budget. Then we put a subamendment and we had a full debate and a vote on that. The subamendment was that we were lobbying the government, collectively, as Members of the House of Assembly, we would diligently argue, outline the rationale why Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and the people of this province and our economic needs should be met with a proper equalization process from Ottawa.

Unfortunately, after a fairly lengthy debate, that motion was defeated by the government. But what we were asking for in that, as part of the

subamendment, was that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were looking for a fair shake in this Confederation. We were looking to offset what should be, and is, necessary to make sure that the people of this province have a quality that is equal to people across the country. We weren't asking for anything unique. We know that, unfortunately, there's a caveat in the federal administration when it comes to our revenues for offshore oil; that it's clawed back. Yet, we have other jurisdictions that that's not the case when it comes to other types of revenue-generating energies.

So we were asking, first and foremost, the discussion has to be around: What is fair for Newfoundland and Labrador? I mean, our offshore oil that we produce, that the skilled people in Newfoundland and Labrador, that the partnerships we develop in this province with international and national companies, should also be used to benefit the people of this province.

We do realize and we do accept that the people of this country should benefit from it also. And we know of the tens of billions of dollars that the Canadian government, regardless of what administration was there, have benefited from the revenues that have been generated here. We accept that. We've gotten to a point where, when our revenues were at a point where we could handle the expenditures, we could invest in infrastructure, we could invest in programs that benefit the people of this province, that we felt then we were in a good place that the rest of the country should also benefit from it.

So we didn't receive any equalization. And that was fair, fair across the board. But the minute that, obviously, our biggest industry, one of our biggest key factors for generating revenue gets hit very dramatically, no fault to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, perhaps no fault to the people in this country, we then become the people who have to take the brunt of it. And that's the unfortunate thing here. That's the formula there that shouldn't be accepted and none of us should accept that now.

I get that it was done, you know, decades ago in a different light and it was probably a rationale to be able to get support on one side or the other. But with that in play, that's one argument that

needs to be re-addressed and, obviously, put in play in the right manner. And that has to be done. So whatever lobbying that needs to be done, collectively, we need to do that. And if there is some favour that we can pull in with whatever part is necessary, I think that needs to be done.

The issue then becomes, because of that miscue a number of years ago, we get hit twice because not only are we not receiving what we could, when we do make money, we don't get an opportunity to catch up on the debt load that we have incurred because of infrastructure or demographics or age or needs in other areas because we don't fit the criteria for equalization.

So we lose on both ends of it. That's not fair. I mean, if you are going to be a benefactor on one end and that falters, there should be some balance there to keep it level. That's what the equalization process is about. The stability around the revenue generating for a province should dictate that a certain quality of programs and services across this country should be delivered.

It doesn't mean we're going to have the exact same ones as they do in BC, nor does BC expect to have the same ones that we may have in Newfoundland and Labrador in a different level. But there's a pendulum there that – there's a balance between all the programs and services and what the expectation should be. So that's where we went in the subamendment.

Unfortunately, it was defeated. I thought we gave some extremely good rational arguments to it. I commend all on this side, because I know the Third Party and the independents supported what we were talking about there and the rationale that, you know, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should be benefactors of our own resources while supporting what is happening in this country.

We were just asking that, collectively, why would we not want to push for a concept that's more relevant to equal for the people of this country, and particularly for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

That was one part of it. We've since then, prior to that, put in an amendment to the budget

because as we went through the debate on the budget – and I'm not faulting the budget for not addressing a number of key issues. Very much so, there are a number of things in here that address issues that are improving on some of the things that we have, that actually are going in a direction that would be beneficial to the people of the province.

The issue we had with this one and why we give it a failing grade is because we're in a unique economic challenge for the people of this province. We're coming out of a COVID challenge, and we know what impact that's had on people physically, socially, financially, mentally. So we think that we were outlining a strategy that should at least make sure we eliminate, as much as possible, or alleviate the stresses and the mental strains on people. We've already talked about a health care crisis. We know there's a multitude of reasons for that: programming, COVID, finances, geographics, out-migration, attracting the medical professionals, all kinds of things that we know have contributed to putting us where we are when it comes to a health care crisis.

Because if it was only one sector of the health care, well then that wouldn't be a crisis. That would be a challenge that we need to come up with, but we know – we hear it from everybody. If it's an ambulance driver to the pharmacist, to the physicians to the nurses, to the staff who work in our facilities here, we hear it from all sectors here that we have a crisis. Will it be solved overnight? No. But do we need to start things immediately? Sure, we do.

So part of why what we talked about there is this is what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been facing for the last two years. That's a challenge now, and I give credit; it only speaks to the volume of the resilience of the people in this province that we've managed to stay here. I know some people have gotten disheartened over it and wanted to give up in this province, but we've stayed here. The business community have stayed here. The people haven't given up. The people have tried to get back to a sense of normality as much as possible.

The education system tried to modify how it would address that. Our health care system, the workers in the health care system have tried to

do their part to ensure that people were as safe as possible. But what we're feeling now, we're into another crisis. We're into a cost-of-living crisis right now, particularly for those middle income, on fixed incomes and the most vulnerable.

We know we're not going to solve all the other problems, but we thought and we were hopeful that the priority in this budget would be about addressing the immediate crisis that we're facing right now, and that's the cost-of-living increase. We know, again I'm going to say, as I said at the beginning, there are things in this budget that do help alleviate some categories, but the one consistent issue and costing effect here is around the cost of fuels, because that has a direct impact on everything else that people have to avail of.

If you're fueling costs are increased, so does the cost of that shipping it, so does the cost of that product when it gets here. And that gets passed on to the consumer. Unfortunately the most vulnerable and those on fixed incomes don't have the flexibility to shop around as the rest of us might have, or to put off for certain things. Particularly if you have health issues, particularly if you live alone, particularly if you live in rural or remote areas.

So there are a lot of other challenges here. We, honestly, didn't flippantly just say we're not going to support this budget but we have some challenges with it. We actually analyzed it, we looked at it, we looked at what we thought should be the priorities, based on what we've heard from the citizens of this province. We asked a multitude of questions. I think well over 100 questions directly on the budget itself. In Estimates every night we're asking for hours, particularly around efficiencies, how could we do things better, how could we invest in a program that will generate more revenue or provide a service more equitably.

And unfortunately we're not feeling confident that this government has a handle on how you can address those things. It's not a slight; it's a perspective from us that we're hearing from the general public. My colleagues and I have had a multitude of meetings over the last number of weeks, particularly since the budget has come down, to ask people what they think. Because maybe we were missing the boat here. Maybe

we didn't get the perspective, because maybe you live in a silo when you're in here, your perspective is based solely on politics versus based on fact and rationale and what would be the best approach. But we're hearing it constantly. And if you listen to the open-line shows, if you listen to people that are being interviewed by the mainstream media, you'll hear the exact same thing.

If you listen to people who voice their opinion on social media, it's even more extreme. Because what we're hearing there are the actual effects it's having on people, the direct impacts. People having to make decisions around heating their home or having their medications, or being able to visit a loved one or going to work anymore. I've had people, constituents of mine, saying price of fuel, the other cost of living; it's not beneficial to me because I'm a minimum wage employee. It's not to my advantage anymore to actually be able to travel on a ferry, pay for gas and that, get in somewhere else, make minimum wage and then come back, get paid for seven hours, yet I'm travelling for at times 10, 12, 13 hours. And still now I'm paying more money out of my pocket that I just can't afford. So we have a lot of challenges in this province here.

What we've been asking with this amendment was simply for government to go back again. And this has been proposed over a week ago now, before we heavily got into Estimates, when there's still an ability to modify the budget, to change things, to priorities in certain areas. We have had debate and we have had a group of individuals here outline what would be particular recommendations to make some changes. We talked about the home heat rebate and what that would mean for individuals. I know the minister has outlined, yes, there is money going as part and parcel of what would be there but the difference is that it doesn't meet the needs when the cost of fuel, if you compare it to two decades ago, is three to four times more. So, yeah, you might up it 10 per cent but that doesn't make up the gap for the 100 per cent increase that is there.

We need to find ways to prioritize certain things. Our argument to this was that we didn't think government were open minded enough to listen to what we were saying and what we were

saying was reflective of what the people of the province were saying to us. I know you must be hearing it from your constituents also. I know there is no way a constituent would be negative towards 50 per cent decrease in the cost of registering your car. I get that; I understand that. But any constituent who would prefer to have a decrease but who can afford it would be much more apt for government to find a way to take care of the people who are most vulnerable. We need those people to actually be productive, engaged and healthy because that only stimulates the economy and moves everything else in the right direction.

There had to be some decisions made there and I know, politically, we try to keep everybody happy and the minister talked about that. Trying to find that balance, that it was a little bit for everybody. I know. But real decision-making, real leadership is about making those harsh decisions that are the right decisions. In some cases, yeah, we'd probably get beat up because a certain level of society weren't getting a break and they still have to incur costs and we all do to incur costs. Everybody cringes when we put that nozzle in that gas tank and you see it. When it starts hitting past the \$100 mark, then you really start seeing the difference of what the cost of fuel is in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Imagine what it means to somebody when they are told from a supplier: I can't go to your house for any less than \$500, \$600, \$700 or \$800. At one time, that was their tank filled for the next two months. Now it is for the next two weeks and they don't have that amount of money to pay for it. Or they pay for it and something else gets neglected, something that they need.

So our argument and our request here was to let us have an open debate around prioritizing how we address the particular needs that have been identified to us as challenges to people. There are all kinds of ways of doing that and we have suggested them. Our colleagues over here have come up with a number of them. That we wanted to have an open, a rational and a factual debate.

We get it; we're spending over \$8 billion. I know maybe some feel that's too much money to be spending, some feel it's not enough to be spending, but, at this time, at this place in

history, in the circumstances we're facing, we collectively should find the best way to use that \$8 billion to make sure those who have the most challenges right now are still going to be able to feel comfortable and have a standard of living that's equitable. And, more importantly, we don't force them to leave Newfoundland and Labrador; we don't force them to go live on the Mainland with one of their family members because it's just not affordable to stay here anymore.

We need to send a message that we want people to come here. We've talked about what we can do to bring expats back here; we've talked about the Come Home Year. A great idea, great concept, 100 per cent hoping it booms. We're hearing some positive things about people wanting to come back, because we know the heart and soul of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, no matter where they live, is still in this province. So they're going to find every physical way to get back here.

But when they get here, they need to know that their loved ones are being taken care of. They need to know when they come back here that there's an enticement, that when they find employment here or if they're ready to retire, they come back to Newfoundland and Labrador. Bring their skill set, bring their monies that they've acquired and invest it here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're 100 per cent supportive of that concept, but we better be able to send the right message.

We've talked about things like the Come Home Year: car rentals, hotel rooms and these types of things, trying to find ways to ensure that it's not embarrassing when people come here. I've been doing some work with the taxi industry. I've met with the minister and the mayor of the City of St. John's and the taxi industry to try to find ways to ensure when people get off that plane, that there's a taxi to meet them, if they can't get a car rental or they don't want to be driving around on their own and that cab driver is knowledgeable of what's going on in the city, what's going on in the region and what's going on in the province from a tourism point of view.

But to do that, we know the taxi industry has three major problems; one, recruiting drivers, because of the administrative nightmare to be

able to do it, the unbelievable number of courses they have to do. We're not saying anything about safety and quality of individuals and all that, but we're saying when you need to do a first aid course and that's not offered for a month, then you need to do a drivers course and that's offered a month later, when the taxi companies need somebody next week.

They've made suggestions around we would administer – I say we collectively, that is them. They would come in with the certifications from the department and they would, on a weekend, instead of one here and there, take 50 drivers who are interested in doing it. They would go to the RNC or the RCMP or to motor vehicle registration and get the abstract for these individuals to prove it. They even went further than it's now law; they said they would get a medical for each one of these drivers.

Part of what they're trying to do, they're trying to show the process that there are seniors out there who are retired, who'd like to come in driving cabs. They're driving in the city. They're not long hauls here as part of that. That's just in the urban centre, that they would like to have a more streamlined process to be able to do it and be more affordable.

Right now, if you wanted to come in, if you're a retiree or you're anyone, and you want to get a cab licence in St. John's, it's \$2,100 before you start and up to three to six months to get that. That doesn't solve our immediate problem we have here.

One of the cab companies here have 133 cars that are dormant. Paid for, the whole thing – well, may not be paid for in the sense of their registration may not be paid, because why would you register a car that's lost revenue, if you don't have a driver to be able to put it on the roads. So there's been some discussion here, and that's why I talked about it.

Now, I'll give credit, we did have the discussion. I know the Premier met with them, and I'm happy to be able to say I helped foster some of that meeting process. I'm hopeful that part of it, that there's a happy medium there around finding how the cab companies now can address that issue by recruiting drivers quicker and the right drivers, the safe drivers, the knowledgeable

drivers to get them in play to be able to work here as part of that process.

But that doesn't help their bottom line when it comes to the cost of fuels, also. They have to maintain businesses. If their additional costs are going up, they're in a quandary, because unlike any other producers of a product or delivering something, they can pass it on directly to the consumer the next day. They're regulated. They have to go through a process.

Sometimes it takes years. I think the last one that they got back for January 1 was a four-year process. So they were in a quandary. People may forget this. Any cab in this province right now, what I've been told, there are 3,000 people who work directly or indirectly in the taxi industry. That's substantial. They're paying money. What they're operating generates a lot of money for the provincial coffers here, through registration, through the taxation when they buy the vehicles, to the maintenance and the costing on that, to the employment tax that's being paid.

There's a very important sector here, at times, that we've got to be cognizant of. So if we're going to do this, make sure we have all our ducks in line and we find the ways to do it.

Why I tell that story is, again, the budget. I want to go back to the fact about being flexible on the fly, and you have to be. I get that we write this up, and I know the diligent staff in the Department of Finance and all the other departments that feed into it. I've been there. I know the process, done months of work.

The budget didn't start the day that the minister brought it down by no stretch. They started months in advance, looking at our potential revenues, our expenditures, the prioritizing, looking at if there's any slippage in a department, if there's any carryover. All these things that are relevant to the decision-making process then. But, at the same time, I've seen it and I've known it as a bureaucrat, I've seen it as a minister, I've seen it in government, the flexibility to be able to move things when you identify a particular issue.

There's always been contingency funds and for right reasons. We've had them when Igor hit. Good thing we did or we'd be scrambling to do

things. No issue about the contingency funds. So when contingency funds are put in departments, or they're put specifically with the Department of Finance, there should be that flexibility to say: We've now discovered stuff that we couldn't control. The minister cannot control what happens on the international market. We have had a debate, maybe a difference of opinion on what else you can do to offset the taxation on fuels. And we'll still have that further debate here about what can or cannot be done.

I know some will argue now, well, you know, it takes six months. I'm not disputing that because there is a process, and we can't just divert around the process for the sake because it's a one-time shot. But our argument has been: we've been having these discussions for the last 10 months. Had it been a proactive approach at one point, maybe now we'd have the ability to take the five cents off that was put there for when the refinery went down. And we're very thankful that the refinery is just about ready to get up and running. It's going to create 400 to 500 jobs and it's going to be a productive asset to the people of this province and to the company coming in, a stable company, to activate that.

But that five cents became a burden to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. And do you know what? The taxpayers reluctantly accepted it. But that was at a time when it was a minimal impact on them. Move ahead five, six months, look at what's happened to the people now: five cents going up on a litre when it's \$1.03 to \$1.08. Do you know what? It's an extra \$2 or \$3 on your tank, but you live with that. Now, let's jump ahead to \$2.10 a litre. What does that mean? That's a dramatic difference.

So people now need any little bit of help they can get. That five cents would be one part of it. The changing of the taxation; we've said it, my shadow minister here of Finance, our caucus here have said it, I've said it to the Premier, I've said it to the media, if we needed to come into the House of Assembly to change legislation that gave the ability to the Minister of Finance or any other minister over there to change the taxation costing so that the taxpayers of this province could get a break on fuels, it would be done in an afternoon. Not a question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Not a question to help the people of this province.

So we've made those offers to do that. And we realize there may have been, on the other side of it, decisions that would mean we're going to pull back on certain other industries right now because we've only got X number of dollars. I realize that. I know we're hearing now from other industries, we're hearing it from the Heavy Civil and the construction industry about tenders. What does that mean for them? I get government budgeted at one hand and circumstances they couldn't control dictated costing is going to be more expensive.

But now I know there are a lot of things that are being held back. Our economy still has to move forward, this is still part of it. It's one thing for one part of the economy to be stalled, if you don't be proactive and it happens that all parts of the economy stalls, we all lose. We have no ability then to make up what needs to be done for the people and, particularly, to take care of the most vulnerable here.

So what we're here doing again is we're encouraging government to have an open discussion. If we're going to have a discussion around roadwork, well, let's make sure that those tenders get out on time. I know tenders have been out but now they're cancelled. What does that mean for the industries? Those industries also have bills to pay. Those industries have people employed who pay taxes, who volunteer as coaches, who are part of municipal councils. We want to ensure that they know that they're going to be safe and confident to be able to stay in their communities and do what they need to do as part of that process.

So what I want to make clear to the people at home: we're not up here to argue or to turn down that the budget isn't good. We're saying there's a good spend of a little over \$8 billion. We're saying what needs to happen now is there has to be an adjustment of a proportion of that to make sure that it hits the particular needs that people are facing right now.

It might mean – it's happened in the past – we have a mid-year update on the budget, so come

back in October, things have changed; the price of gas is down to \$1.15 or \$1.20. We come back and say: You know, the breaks we gave you people, it was done so that we could encourage you to be able to be stable, healthy, do the things you were doing. But right now things are better, you've gotten back, we're going to need to take that money back because we now need to put it in health care or infrastructure or education or something else, or we're going to keep it where it is now because we need to give people an opportunity to get back on their feet.

They're the kind of conversations that we were hoping to have in the House of Assembly. That's what we were proposing. It wasn't an attack. I don't think any Member over here attacked for what was being done. What we were saying was here are some suggestions of other things that need to be done or what need to be prioritized, even some suggestions on how that could be funded as part of that process.

We were even willing to take some of the backlash if a certain industry said, well, there's less money going into this this year because we're going to make sure other people are taken care of because this is the specific priority right now. Because if we suggest something over here, we're going to stand by it. That's the reality. If we suggest it, we're going to stand by it. Because I give credit, over here it's analyzed, if you look at our Blue Book, we've not only talked about what the issue is, we've talked about what the potential solution is. It's not the be-all and end-all, but we've also talked about what it would cost and how it would be costed out.

That's being proactive here. What we wanted to have in this dialogue here, and particularly the amendment, was about having that open dialogue again. We knew we had a few weeks, maybe a month or so that we could make some changes to the budget that would reflect the particular needs now.

Now, I would suspect everybody in this House – I know I did and I would think the Minister of Finance was thinking the same way – the minute she brought down the budget that things would change in a positive right after. That the price of fuels would go down and all these other things that have an impact on people would. But,

unfortunately, we can't foresee that, nor can we control it. The only thing we can control: the monies we do have, we spend in the right manner to ensure that those who need it the most right now are the ones that are taken care of.

That's the criticism we have right now with this budget, that it didn't go far enough in the right areas. It went across, there's a balance and everybody's getting a little bit out of this budget to offset the extra costs they have in their pocket. Nobody's disputing that. But we're saying we needed a bit more creativity, a bit more acknowledgement that there is some suffering – not some – a big proportion of our society suffering more than others and that part of our society are the most vulnerable and the ones, unfortunately, that may have to make choices that are even going to be more detrimental to them and more costly to us as a society in the long run.

So that's what the amendment itself here was about. So I wanted to outline that to everybody here so people would understand we're not just frivolously getting up and disagreeing with government or criticizing government or attacking government on anything. We haven't done that, I haven't seen that from this side of the House since we got up here. We may disagree. I think we had more open discussion or more aggressive discussion, for want of a better phrase, on a piece of policy than we did on the budget here. Because we were all trying to have a sense of co-operation and let's find what works.

What we've been doing while the budget's been ongoing, because we were fearful that we might've missed what were the priorities of people, we've been out engaged.

Last night, I was in a community sitting with some constituents and had a grand conversation about what their priorities were. And I got it, I got what they're priorities were. Health care, the cost of living and, because it was in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, I got about regionalization. Very much so. It was an eye-opener for me because it was a different perspective of regionalization from a community that I wouldn't have thought of.

I'm a believer there's support for regionalization and it would work to everybody's benefit, but sometimes geographically that doesn't even work. And the fear people were having that it would be a taxation grab on people who don't avail of any other services from government and don't have the ability to, nor could a government or a municipality be able to support them because the geographic distances weren't workable.

But the underlying issue – and most in the room were senior citizens, which is worrisome, too, because in rural Newfoundland and Labrador – I drove the same community area or the same region 35 years ago as a civil servant and there would be hundreds of young people on the streets. I even used to go out and we'd have meetings with them. To find a young person now in some of these areas in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly one that's engaged with some of the issues, it's unfortunately a rare occurrence. That speaks volumes about how we find a way to sustain rural Newfoundland and Labrador, make it attractive for people to be there and find ways to ensure that there is a future for these areas.

Last night, we talked about health care. There is one community that has, in the regional area, a cottage hospital, but they're having the same struggles that a lot of rural and remote areas are having: keeping their doctors or attracting doctors here. The plan would be that one of the larger health facilities in the region would send their doctors down periodically. The problem with that is that it still doesn't solve the issue because now you're just robbing from Peter to pay Paul. So now the larger centre is without a doctor for a period of time when they go down to one of the more remote areas. There has to be a full perspective on what we do here.

I know there is a whole recruitment discussion process here going. I know we talked about the Health Accord. I've noted before, we have met five times as a caucus and I have had two other discussions with the Health Accord leaders and was fortunate enough to suggest someone who should sit on the Health Accord who has some background and that to do it.

What we see in the report extremely outlines what a strategy should be. But there are some

immediate things that need to happen, immediately. I don't see them reflected in this budget. That's the unfortunate thing there. Not only am I talking the cost of living, now I'm going to pivot to the health care because they are all connected. They all have an impact. The cost of living has an impact and people have to make decisions around the cost of their health care to the quality of the food that they eat to if they are warm and comfortable and what impact that has on their mental health. We have had a big discussion around mental health this week, as it is Mental Health Week in this country.

What we haven't seen is an approach that says: Here are our immediate interventions, here's what we're going to do right now on all of these issues, here's what we're going to make sure we do in the next year and here's what we're going to do in the next three years, five and 10 years.

We've have a lot of discussion, and the Minister of Health even yesterday in two of the questions he answered talked about: Well, we're still in discussions and we're discussing that and yes that is an issue around mental health and we're having that discussion. Discussion time should be done. We've come too far, we've done too many; these issues are not new.

I accept that and I know it has been said by a number of ministers over the years: This didn't happen overnight. We accept that. It wasn't caused or not solved by one administration. Sometimes priorities change and they move, sometimes circumstances you can't control. But what we're saying now, we know what's happening right now. We know we have a health care crisis and there has to be an aggressive approach on how we deal with that. We know we have a cost of living crisis. There has to be an aggressive way of dealing with that.

We know we have to find ways to improve our revenues. One of the best ways is to get the monies that we're entitled to, a better return on our natural resources and equalization from Ottawa. Being able to get Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador, use their skill set, work here, pay taxes here and be productive citizens here. That drives the economy.

Invest in some of our other industries: We have a great conversation here about the good things that are happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. One of our industries that could flourish fivefold is tourism. We know that and we need a strategy. The strategy around tourism also has to do with our ability to connect to the rest of the world: our airports, our ferry services, even our communication from basic things like signs on the highway, what that means for people travelling further and going out to another attraction and spending money in that area. So these are all things that need to be thought out, need to be debated, need to be discussed and a holistic approach and plan and strategy needs to be put in play.

So, you know, I've heard it a number of times: We have a plan. We have a strategy. We have a vision. We're ready for change. We seen it in the last budget: *Change starts here* I believe it was. This one is *Change is in the air*. Great.

Our issue, and what we are hearing from the people that talk to us, is we're not seeing the change in a positive light. We're not seeing the change for the betterment of the people of this province. We're not seeing the change where they have hope that there is going to be a brighter future. We're not seeing change that businesses are going to feel confident to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador and we're not seeing change that the expats, the people who moved away because of economics or for education, would have the hope to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the fear.

So we engage change. We welcome it. We'll even work with it. But it has to be change that makes sense and works for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. And we're not seeing it in this budget. We're seeing things that at least start the process but didn't go far enough. A little glimmer there but not a big enough flame so that it's bright and people can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

So that's why we amended, to have an outline about having an open dialogue, to look at the struggling cost that people are incurring in Newfoundland and Labrador and the rising cost of living to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

So as I keep talking about what we are discussing here, I want to just touch on some of the things that are in the budget. I had this conversation in some of Question Period about certain things that are there. A lot of the things that are outlined – and I get it, all administrations do it, don't tout whatever the great things that we are adding into our programs and budgets, but you need to have something that is so creative, so innovative that it, actually, when you read it, you first shake your head and say: Can that work? When you read it again you go: I think it can. That is creative and it's based on something. It's going to stimulate and get the end result that you wanted.

Most of the money that's been outlined here as big touted things, really are not creative enough that they're really going to benefit people in the long run here.

I'll just talk about some here: no provincial taxes and fee increase. I have to say it, from 2016 on I would hope there would have been none, but the sugar tax is still there. So that's no big incentive here to do anything here. We've been taxed to death so much I don't even think it's physically possible to put any more tax on it. People just literally will leave in droves because they'll be so disenfranchised with what's happening in this province.

A 50 per cent reduction in vehicle registration. Everybody would welcome more money in their pockets. We get that. But that's not going to change the outcome economically for the people of this province. It's definitely not going to address the challenges that people have now, those on very limited fixed incomes and those most vulnerable, when it comes to those types of things.

Ten-dollar-a-day child care – a great initiative. Still some challenges with the daycare owners because I've got two who reached out to me today about some of these services. Another challenge about that is if we don't have a sustainable economy for people to stay around, then they're not going to have to avail of the \$10-a-day daycare as part of that process. One of the other challenges where we need to be proactive when we look at this, because daycares are going to have to bring this in, after-school programs are becoming a challenge.

I'm hearing now from my constituents, and constituents from other districts here, that now the daycares are cancelling the after-school programs because they have to prioritize being part of the \$10-a-day daycare process. So we need to have these dialogues. We're not blaming anybody; this is not a blame thing. This is about we need to be cognizant of some of these other issues.

For every action there's a reaction, so we need to be creative enough. If you're going to do this, what would be five reactions down the road? That's where a proactive government comes into play, and see what the benefit would be for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

A 10 per cent increase in the Seniors' Benefit – extremely welcome. Except we've already talked and my colleagues have talked about it, 10 per cent for a 300 per cent increase does very little, if anything. It's disillusioned because they'll get a hundred dollars and then there are other things that are in society now that went up \$400, basic stuff that has to go. Simple things we talked about like the rapid testing, particularly for seniors and that who are vulnerable and who have a higher level of anxiety and fear for their health. Now, all of a sudden, they're using the few extra dollars that they have that should be used for other things to offset the cost of fuels, which is not even close to what the increase would be. So things like that, that we're talking about.

Funding to help homes with transitions from oil to electric heat – a wonderful idea. I have no qualms about it. The problem is going to be we're in an immediate crisis. These things are 10 months to five years down the road before people can implement that. You've got to have some of your own money to put in that up front. That doesn't exist. The people we're hearing from, that literally is not an uptake program that can help them right now deal with the challenges that they have.

Mr. Speaker, \$3.6 billion for health care. We've never argued about the investment in health care. I mean, we were there, I was in Cabinet, I know what we approved in the sense of monies for health care. It's where the priorities become in health care that become the creative way of addressing the issues in Newfoundland and

Labrador. That's what we've been challenging here. We're not seeing the perspective that actually outlines a plan of action. A plan that really prospectively takes care of addressing the immediate issues, the intermediate issues and the long-term issues when it comes to health care, and shows a plan that makes sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are healthier tomorrow, next year and 10 years down the road.

So saying you're spending money, that's not new money. That's part of the budget process. What would have been impressive to me, and I would think the people of the province, is saying these are the new programs that we're doing. Here are the outcomes that are going to benefit you. Not only is it going to benefit you, but here's how financially the rest of the people in this province are going to benefit from that investment there. We haven't seen that in this plan.

Mr. Speaker, \$14 million to improve access to primary health care. Again, it sounded good as part of the primary budget for health care, but we've already heard now, all we did was shift things around. We really didn't improve anything. People are still questioning, I still don't have access to a doctor. Now I have to travel further to get this access. Do we agree with collaborative teams? Of course, we do.

We've been saying for years, when I was the critic for Health on this side, I had said it then, that we needed to look at the scope of work for the health professionals we have there. We have by far the best trained, the best skilled, the best committed and dedicated health professionals in this world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: We've got to give them the ability to do what they're good at. Particularly when we need them to do what they're good at in areas that can't provide other types of services, because we can't draw down on other expertise who used to do that in the past. Our pharmacists, our paramedics, our nurse practitioners, our licensed practical nurse, our personal care attendants, every other member of the health profession could do it.

We know our doctors are overburdened. We know what our doctors are capable of. We know what our doctors want to do. We've had a multitude of meetings with the Medical Association. We've been there with their frustrations. We've been there with their recommendations. We've analyzed and we've challenged them on stuff, but we see their frustrations. We see why doctors are leaving Newfoundland and Labrador.

They're feeling that they're not being taken seriously. That their recommendations are not being enacted. They're feeling, at the end of the day, that they're overburdened and they're not appreciated. They're feeling that they're at a point now where they're not allowed to have a quality of life also, because we didn't put a process in play that recruits the number of doctors, or sets up the health care system so that they're not overburdened with either administration or that they can use their skill set to do what's direct assessment.

Direct assessment is looking at the serious assessments of the health care situation that our individual may be facing and assess a particular treatment that would be beneficial to that person, keeps them healthy, ensures that they're more productive and saves money for the health care system. That hasn't happened.

Mr. Speaker, \$11.6 million to increase for teaching services: We know about our education system; we know we need to invest in our young people. Infrastructure-wise, I think we've done wonderful over the last number of decades: new schools, state of the art, all of the amenities that they should have from social recreation to labs, all the things that were necessary, to also addressing in schools services for special needs children and these types of things.

Is there still much more work to do? Without a doubt – without a doubt – but it has to, again, be done based on the principle of talking to the people who have those particular needs. We are hearing it from, at times, the NLTA about some of the challenges that, yeah, money is being invested and that helps a small sector, but there are other things that need to be done too, or that investment is really not going to be as productive as you would have liked.

Let's talk about the \$3 million to increase the nursing seats for Memorial University. That's great. We've been saying it for years, it should be done, it's necessary, but while that discussion is going on, there is apprehension on the West Coast about what's going to happen to the nursing school out there and the nursing program. What's going to happen to the people from Labrador or the North Coast or the West Coast who want to go to the nursing school at Memorial out in Corner Brook?

There have been some very tense discussions out there. I've had them with the mayor of Corner Brook. I've had them with the mayor of other surrounding communities. I've had them with health care professionals out there. I've had them with councillors. They all have the same worry that there isn't stability in what we're doing here. You don't help your health care system or any system if you take one from this side and put it on that side. That doesn't add the ability to perform or address a particular backlog. So there are some things around that. While it's all welcome, we are again saying it doesn't address particular needs that may be there.

Mr. Speaker, \$21 million for a province-wide radio systems: We know that. That's welcomed, but we laughed because we know where the money came from. We know it was taken from somebody else who sees the value of it, needed it for their organization and their long-term investment. We know. The money was taken back, so we're not even going to dispute that. We're disappointed that while that's an investment, taking credit for that investment, when it's really not, it's money that came from another pot of funding. We know that.

Mr. Speaker, \$1 million additional funds for Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue: I will nod that. I talked to the search and rescue people and that is a welcomed investment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: A very much-welcomed investment, long over due. Probably one of 200 things I could vote for in the budget at this point, but that's long over due.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) new school.

D. BRAZIL: We'll get to that new school in a minute. Long overdue.

There is \$25 million for the connectivity incentives, including broadband and cellular – great. The problem with that is, from our perspective, and I was at the press conference – I crashed the press conference in Corner Brook, got great play, I got to thank my Liberal colleagues federally and provincially for inviting me right up to the front of it, and giving me all the information. I had a grand conversation; it was good – and welcomed it. And did thank the federal MPs that it was a good initiative.

Until I found out that the timelines to have it implemented are going to be years down the road – years down the road. We've got communities now that are dying for proper broadband connection – dying for it. I thought we were coming, and there were 25 companies going to start tomorrow, there were towers going to go up and there are booster programs and services put in play to do it. And then I find out, no, no, this is the first stage. Like a lot of things that we've noticed here, they get announced well in advance of them actually being implemented. And that gets people's hopes up, like all of it –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

D. BRAZIL: I even came out to thank him. I'll be honest, my own people advised me about not going to it. I said: B'ys, if it's a good announcement, why wouldn't I go and say well done? Particularly when I heard one of the communities that is going to benefit from it is one of the communities in my district on Bell Island: Wabana. I said: Well, that'll be great; that's wonderful. Now I can't wait to see, so I can go back and tell our constituents: Hold off, you'll be able to get cell service; you'll be able to get your broad – you're not spending \$350 monthly because you've got sticks and cards and everything else that you have to buy.

Then I find out I guess it'll be a long time before they're going to be able to be serviced at that level. So there were some challenges around that. While we welcome it, we do ask, there has to be a way to push this a lot quicker. When you're going to have these partnerships with the federal government, have a time frame that

moves it to the next level. So we need it moved very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, \$4.7 million to advance the cause of reconciliation in Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, another applauding. As the critic for Labrador and Indigenous Affairs, very much support that – very much support it. But we need to move that along. That dialogue, that discussion needs to be done, so that we can have an understanding and co-operation. So if there are areas where we need closure, that we can get closure for Indigenous communities, and support what needs to be done there.

So while there's money being announced, we're not seeing the attachment that here's our time frames and here's how we're going to move this out. Here's what's going to happen. So there are things like that we're cognizant of saying why we have some struggles with this budget.

Speaker, \$27.4 million to continue construction of the Corner Brook hospital. Well, we know the dialogue on the Corner Brook hospital, and we're not in any way, shape or form saying that that facility is not needed and not going to be beneficial to the people of the West Coast, and all of this province, as part of it. But we know there are some challenges around what's going to be offered in it, how it's going to be staffed, what are going to be the subcontracts out around, where are the amenities going to be. Are they going to be four kilometres down; are they going to be in another community? There are still some struggles around what's happening there.

So part of what we're also asking, be a little bit more open and transparent with people when you're putting the money out there and selling this is what we're going to do. People will accept it or they won't accept it, but if there's a rationale for it, it is what it is. And if it can be justified, then it's much easier for all of us to move on and then go to the next issue that we need to deal with as part of that process.

Twenty million in new funding to support our tourism, hospitality, arts and cultural industries. Not an argument in the world will you hear from this side of the House about investing in either one of those sectors. From my perspective, out of all these sectors in Newfoundland and Labrador – and I know other ones generated a

lot more money in certain areas, the oil and gas and the mineral industry and some of the other tech industries – but the potential to quadruple an industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is in those industries, in our tourism industry and our cultural industry. We've seen already what we're doing in the TV production industry and the movie and film industry, very much so. So you won't hear criticism on that at all. Very supportive of that, very much so. So we applaud it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

D. BRAZIL: It wasn't your going; it was your coming back was the issue.

No, we welcome that. Listen, we know there are investments that have to be done, but there are also timely investments, and sometimes the timely investment is not the time to do it, unfortunately. It's a balance, and you get where we're coming from. Not that the negotiation wasn't important, but when people are in crisis we all have to make sacrifices, and that's the reality here.

I said it last night and I said it again today or yesterday and I said it again today in Question Period. We have to set the bar. Whether or not we like it, it's a reality. For two reasons: one, hopefully it stabilizes people to understand that there is a plan of action and that we're going to get there; and the second is somebody needs some direction. We need to give people direction here.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are too caught up in their own important things in life to be worrying about all the bigger things that they have no direct input into. The real direct input, as was said to me, I get it once every four years when I get to mark my X. That's the only time I feel that I actually have input into changing anything.

So let's give them more sense of stability. Every day they have an opportunity to have input by what they share with me and my colleagues and you guys, with your staff and everybody else that that will get to a point where it will have influence on what the decisions are. And it will reflect what people's needs are. So that's what

we're trying to promote as we do what we're going here.

A million dollars to convert the former College of the North Atlantic campus to a public building and courthouse for the Bay St. George area. Now, that's a contentious one. Not that you're going to invest in upgrading access to our health care system, but the bigger picture of the location and the benefit for doing those type of things. So all we were suggesting is more dialogue, more understanding of how that should be implemented, and whether or not that would be what would be most acceptable to the people in that region. Because it's a regional courthouse is what we're talking about there. So things like that we're talking about. That dialogue, that inclusion.

Speaker, \$10.5 million for agricultural development. Only criticism in that, it's not enough, the only criticism at the end of the day. It's great to have that investment, \$10.9 million is a good start, but if we're going to get agriculture going where it should be, our own food security and stability here, getting young people back into the agriculture industry. There's no reason why this couldn't be done, but we welcome it. It's a good first step. Another good first step but needs to go a bit further.

An additional 39 positions with an almost \$10 million investment for cancer care at the new regional hospital in Corner Brook. Never will I ever argue about money being invested in health care, or invested particularly in a component of health care that is life or death, and that's cancer care. Not a question whatsoever. So we talk about that credibility, we talk about what's important, and we compliment that. We still think there needs to be more investments in health care and a better approach to how we deliver health care.

Speaker, \$146.8 million to improve housing stability and preventing homelessness, a new Alcohol Action Plan, a Life Promotion Suicide Prevention Action Plan and reducing tobacco and vaping use. One hundred per cent support it, 100 per cent of each one of those programs. We said it from the day it was announced by the minister that they were creative. We saw new initiatives. We applauded them. Contrary to what people might think, we actually applauded

those initiatives, thought they were good; thought they were creative. Personally, because I know some of the people in that field, I thought and I'm confident they reflect dialogue that your ministers and your government had with these individuals. So well done. Good way to promote that – good way to promote it.

Let's try to do it for all the other sectors when we're spending the taxpayers' money; when we're trying to develop programs and services; be cognizant of what the general public and the agencies and organizations that we represent bring forward.

I want to address a couple of other things, too, as we're having our discussion here. I want to clarify something that was said by one of the colleagues over the last couple of weeks about: Well, you wasted all the money you had. If you hadn't wasted all the money during the oil days – because I had made reference to where we were with equalization. Equalization was, at a point, because our demographic, our population, our challenges financially and our geography, dictates that we have expenses that no other jurisdiction in this country has and it is very costly. Our environment, obviously, dictates that.

Just think about it. I was Minister of Transportation and Works at one point and I remember going to Ontario to First Ministers' Meetings or my colleague ministers' meetings and we were doing our presentation. I was noting how many roads that we had to clear on a daily basis and the minister for Ontario and Saskatchewan said after in a social event – I'm not saying that they didn't believe me but they challenged me on the numbers because they said it wasn't physically possible for us to maintain that many roads in our environment, with our terrain, for the budget that I had in comparison to what they were doing in a more hospitable environment with three times the budget. I said it is. You're right, it isn't capable; you're not capable of doing it at the level that you should, but we are innovative, we're creative here. We manage to keep it so that the people can travel as safe as possible. So there are challenges around that.

There were challenges why equalization is so important so that we can get to that level. We

don't have to be the best. We don't have to spend the most on everything in Newfoundland and Labrador above our counterparts, but we should be able to provide the proper service that people should and expect to have in this province. Maybe not what they want but what they expect and need in this province.

So I just wanted to note, you know, in 1999: \$1.2 billion in equalization; 1999-2000, over \$1 billion; 2000-2001, \$1.2 billion; 2001-2002, \$1.2 billion; 2002-2003, \$1.2 billion and these are extra monies. The cheque just comes in hand. The cheque comes in hand to go towards either your debt load or give you the ability to upgrade roads, upgrade health care, education, but then it dropped and it dropped dramatically in 2008-2009 to \$116 million. Then in 2009-2010 on, nothing. Deficit. We were actually paying out to the federal government – a net loss.

So this speaks volumes. Imagine if we had a billion dollars a year for the last 12 years, what that would have done for our debt load, what it would have done for programs and services. That would have been a great investment here.

Again, I'll make it clear; this is not on the Liberal administration right now. We're talking about all administrations that had been there before and I would say continue. The forefront fight has to be that Ottawa has a responsibility to give us what we are entitled to, treat us fairly as part of the whole process. And we are not seeing that right now. I know we get some things, and myself and the Premier have had conversations and I've touted the mitigation. It's great. It takes pressure off people. It's welcomed.

You know, we've argued that maybe we could have gotten something a little bit different if we were we in power, maybe we couldn't. But what I say across the board is that I know that the Premier and his Cabinet ministers probably use some of their political clout and probably even called in some favours to get certain things done. My issue with that, and it would be on (inaudible) of whatever administration was there, we shouldn't have to that. It should be easier sold on the merits that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians contributes so much to this economy, so much to this country, that we

should be able to get stuff back in return that we're entitled to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Just that we're entitled to.

Again, that is no slight to Liberal administration in Ottawa now or to the administration here because I've seen it on the other sides also. But now I think, collectively, not only all Members of this House, but all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – even those that don't live here anymore – should be speaking out to say that we're not getting our fair share and there is a reason for that. Maybe it is political posturing that was done 20 years ago, 30 years ago, three weeks ago, I don't know. But whatever it is, collectively, we need to be able to now respond that as a collective group here we want a fair shake on what we're doing when it comes to that.

Did we do well in the 2007-2008 on for 5 or 6 years, financially? Did we have an abundance of revenues coming from our oil industry? Of course we did. It is unfortunate, where the oil prices are up now, we don't have production, which doesn't give us the ability to do that.

But I will tell you – and people have questioned: You had over \$20 billion, what did you do with that? You wasted it. I say, no, we didn't waste it. We started to look at giving people what they needed and ensuring that the infrastructure was in play so that for decades to come at least there would be a certain standard, and we did that.

I'll give you an example: We spent an additional \$6 billion in infrastructure, above and beyond what we normally would have – \$6 billion to ensure that our roads, our bridges, our schools, all the things that needed to be done, our hospitals, all those facilities were built.

Tax relief: We gave back \$4 billion into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with tax relief. It was the first time in our history that we reversed taxation – first time – because it was the people's money. They had worked hard to get us to that level; we gave it back to them.

Public sector wage increases: For nine years, people would know, the public sector didn't

have an increase. We knew we were losing very talented individuals because for their own sustainability they had to go somewhere. So that was an extra \$1.5 billion, which goes back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, which goes back into the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Pension plan liability: One of the biggest debts hanging over our head was the pension plan liability, that it could collapse any day. That would have had a detrimental effect on our own economic thing, but then the tens of thousands of those pensioners who were already out there. So we went \$3.6 billion to stabilize that. That pension plan now is one of the most stable in this country and will, over the next number of years, as the economy changes and as the markets improve, you'll see there will be a net return down the road that hopefully will either go back to the retirees or back into general accounts so that it can be spent for all kinds of other services.

Poverty reduction: \$1.2 billion. We went from the worst in the country to the best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: We're being mimicked now by other provinces. Unfortunately, that got dropped.

Northern Strategic Plan: \$5.5 billion to ensure things in Labrador and Northern communities got done. My colleague, the minister will know, in Labrador, we did a lot for the infrastructure. We improved infrastructure there and improved engagement for people in the area.

Tuition freeze and student aid reform: That enhanced the ability for our post-secondary education institutions to be attractive to people in Newfoundland and Labrador, domestically and internationally. That's why now we can boast that we have some of the best, innovative post-secondary institutions in this country and in this world. That's why we draw people from all over and why our students are some of the best in the world.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I would say it was a privilege again to speak to it. I look forward to more debate on the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

All those in favour of adopting the amendment, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

Division

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

MHA Brown, ready or do you want a few more minutes? Good?

We're going to give it a couple of more minutes just in case there are other Members that need to show up.

Order, please!

We're going to call for the vote as it pertains to the amendment put forward by the Member for Conception Bay South and seconded by the Member for Harbour Main regarding the main budget.

All those in favour of the amendment, please rise.

CLERK: David Brazil, Barry Petten, Paul Dinn, Craig Pardy, Tony Wakeham, Chris Tibbs, Loyola O'Driscoll, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Lloyd Parrott, Pleaman Forsey, Jeff Dwyer, James Dinn, Jordan Brown, Lela Evans.

SPEAKER: All those against the amendment, please rise.

CLERK: Andrew Furey, Steve Crocker, Lisa Dempster, John Haggie, Gerry Byrne, Tom Osborne, Siobhan Coady, Pam Parsons, Sarah Stoodley, Andrew Parsons, John Hogan, Bernard Davis, Derrick Bragg, John Abbott, Brian Warr, Elvis Loveless, Paul Pike, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Lucy Stoyles, Perry Trimper.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 14; the nays: 20.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I declare that the amendment has been defeated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Mr. Speaker, I just want to stand quickly on a point of order on Standing Order 16 on Division. Mr. Speaker, if you reference 16(2): "The Division Bells shall ring for a period of not more than 10 minutes or for such lesser time as may be signified to the Speaker by the Government and Opposition Whips..." or I guess in this case typically our House Leaders.

Just for future votes, Mr. Speaker, if you could provide some clarity on that maybe. Because it could cause a situation here if we don't know where a single Member is, we could spend significant time, Mr. Speaker. I'm not trying to impede anybody's right to vote or ability to vote, but just if we could get some clarification or keep that in mind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

We will review that and get back to each Member on what the clarity of the interpretation of the Standing Order is.

Other business?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, it's always nice to get up and speak on the budget, especially this time of year.

I'd like to say goodbye to the Premier again before he goes out the door.

Anyway, we'll get the budget on the way and we'll talk about being up here for the District of Exploits to speak on the budget.

Mr. Speaker, it frustrates me sometimes when I'm here speaking on the budget because, you know, it's the things that we see in our district sometimes, the things that we see happening, especially right now with the cost of living. The cost of living in my district, everybody feels it, and I know Members here in the House of Assembly feel it. We're getting calls from everyday people, seniors and everybody in our district that is finding it hard with the cost of living.

Yes, I know there were some things in the budget like the 10 per cent to the seniors, one payment in July, that sort of stuff. It helps, it does help, but the median people, middle-income people, they seem to be left out again. They're trying to get to work. They're trying to feed their families. They're trying to buy food for their families and they are frustrated with regard to what's happening with the cost of living. There are things we could have done, probably, a little bit more.

I know our Member for Stephenville - Port au Port always stressing the rebate program. Yes, that could have been utilized in this budget and to help out more, that would be in that program.

Taxes on fuel, again, I'll go with the taxes on fuel, especially the carbon tax, is one that we need to be piping up about, talking to Ottawa and saying that we need these taxes, those carbon taxes, lifted. It doesn't help our people that are trying to get to work, with food and travel. They really feel they're left out.

The cost of living, today, is worse now than ever before and we need to be doing more to alleviate some of that stress on the people of our province, that they're able to afford more, get more for their children and have more options in life to be able to do what they want to do instead of just trying to get to work, trying to survive.

Health care, Mr. Speaker, that's another big issue again in my district. I've been hearing it for months, and I know we're hearing it all across our districts, I know we are. Yes, I know that the Health Accord is coming out with a plan and they're looking at different ideas, virtual care seems to be really high on the agenda. I know that they've put in the hubs and that sort of stuff to take some calls, but that only alleviates some of the stresses that's caused by the health care of the day.

I know in Central Newfoundland, the emergency service; the emergency service at the regional hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor, they're just overwhelmed. They can't take no more people at times. They're almost putting them on the floor instead of beds and that in the emergency units. That is a shame.

I know there was a ribbon cutting on the long-term care unit in Grand Falls-Windsor, which probably would alleviate some of the acute care right now that's in the hospital, that way probably open up more rooms for emergency patients, that sort of stuff.

That is the stuff we need to do and we can do. It should have been done, really. You know as far as doctors go, we could be using more locums. We could be using more nurse practitioners that could be utilized, need to be talked to more and see how we can arrange to use those people. So that would have taken, certainly, a lot off the system and our doctors – we need more doctors to go in, and I know that they are trying to recruit. They are looking at more doctors. They need to be talking to the NLMA more. They need to be talking to the nurses. The full conundrum of health care workers, it starts from long-term care units. It goes from doctors, emergency services right on down to home care and LPNs. There is a full gamut that needs to be addressed.

With regard to emergency services in Central Newfoundland, I know that the 24-hour emergency services were stripped from the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood in 2016. That unit needs to be opened up right now. That needs to be reinstated with the emergency service that is being done at the Grand Falls-Windsor hospital, our regional hospital. That is overwhelmed and I know that to open up the emergency services at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre there's no cost. It is cost-neutral. That was said in two elections for the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre. So if it was cost-neutral in two elections, then it is cost-neutral now.

So if that was open – and they said with the long-term care being open in Botwood last July – that's a year ago – that the staffing would be in place and the 24-hour emergency service would be reinstated. Still not done. The ribbon cutting was never done on the long-term care there. I don't know why. The ribbon cutting could not be done on something that is not open, so I can't see why the ribbon cutting wasn't done on the long-term care in Botwood a year ago when they would have officially opened it and then they would have had the staff there and then they could have reinstated the 24-hour emergency service.

In so doing, alleviating some of the stress off the Grand Falls-Windsor hospital and directing some of that to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood. When you are looking for ideas of what to do, of how to alleviate some of the stress on our system right now, that's some of the options that we are willing to provide. And it can be done, because that one was cost-neutral. That one baffles me. Maybe it's just the ribbon cutting so they haven't got to announce that the long-term care is officially opened. Maybe that's what's dragging it back.

So when the people have to look at these things, the cost of living in Central Newfoundland, the health care, especially the emergency units, doctors – and I know again we're getting it all over. So when they see that the money is being put into the wrong places, it frustrates them; it really does. And it frustrates me, because I have to bring their concerns to the House of Assembly and speak for them. And this is what they tell me.

When they see \$30 million gone to a company in the States to streamline health care, which they're not seeing an effect from, that disturbs them. It really does. Where did the \$30 million go? How come we have no doctors? Where's the \$30 million?

When they see \$5 million going to another company in the States to tell us what we own, that disturbs them. They call me and I have to bring this to the House of Assembly. They still have no doctors; they're still trying to buy oil for their oil tanks. They cannot get any alleviation, yet there's money being spent. And especially then they can't afford these things, yet they can see that now they're going to open a Premier's office and another quarter-million dollars spent and we still have no health care. We still can't get it to work. That's only for one year for the quarter-million dollars to open that Premier's office. And that disturbs the people of Central Newfoundland; it really does. And it disturbs me, because now I have to bring another concern of wasteful to the House of Assembly. Because the Premier said that he needed a voice in Central Newfoundland.

Well, I don't buy it. I really don't buy it. I mean, to say we have Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, we have Fogo Island - Cape Freels, we have Lewisporte - Twillingate, we have Gander, which is the minister's district of himself, all about the health care, which he could've had this 24-hour emergency service done and probably straighten up some of this system. So we have problems there. We have the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, and the Member for Exploits. Again, six Members in Central Health system and the Premier needs another voice.

It's shameful; it really is. Four Members of the Liberal caucus can't speak up for Central Newfoundland. That's what the Premier is saying; we have no voice. Four Members of the Liberal caucus that are not speaking. They can put in an office to put in, not the elected Members of the Liberal caucus, but the failed candidate of the Liberal caucus. That's what they do in Central Newfoundland.

I know you're looking at me and saying, b'ys, what's happening here? It's true. When people see this \$250,000 straight up to with regard to

spending that shouldn't be there, then people do get upset.

I know the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, yes, he's in favour of the office. That's fine, he can and so are the couple of people that he was talking to, but I've been talking to a lot more than a couple of people. Actually, my district has over 9,500 voters, and I think each one of them has reached out to me.

AN HON. MEMBER: Were you talking to your mayor?

P. FORSEY: Yeah, that was number two, actually. That was one of the couple that I guess Fortune ...

Anyway, getting back to the more serious problem, and it is a serious problem, when people see this happening, it's frustrating to the people and they want to me to bring this to the House of Assembly.

As far as that goes, then we've got the economy. The economy itself is poor in Central Newfoundland right now. I know there's mining. Mining is starting to come up. I know the mining is starting to go; it will be in 2023. Hopefully that goes and it should go.

I tell you what happened in 2017. The Liberal government, actually, unlocked 280,000 cubic metres of forest, timber from the old Abitibi permit. Listen, which was a good thing. It really was, but that were forests that were left there – when Abitibi closed down, that forest was supposed to be there for a secondary industry for Central Newfoundland. Now, there's not a permit left to get – not a permit in Central Newfoundland.

You see where I'm talking about for the economy of Central Newfoundland. It was taken away from us. All the permits are gone to the bigger players on the Island.

I heard the Minister of Forestry on the radio saying that forestry employs 1,500 people. Probably it does, but the direct jobs that are in Central Newfoundland, in my district, is not 1,500 jobs. That I can guarantee the Member for Green Bay and I think that he would have to agree.

AN HON. MEMBER: Baie Verte - Green Bay.

P. FORSEY: Baie Verte - Green Bay, I apologize.

So anyway, when you see the economy and all those permits are gone outside where most of the jobs are when we could have secondary processing in Central Newfoundland, that would boost the economy of Central Newfoundland.

Other than that, we got to see that you're taking away our economy, the cost of living is driven up and the health care is gone – it's not crumbling, it's gone – and nothing being done about it. When the people see that there's \$250,000 on a Premier's office to hire Liberal friends, then b'y, people do get disgruntled. That's what's happening in Central Newfoundland.

Again, we'll just touch on something else with regard to accepting our options of what we'd like to see in the budget. You want to work together, but it seems it doesn't happen that way. It seems that you don't take our options. You just turned down our suggestions in one of the debates and you refused an emergency debate on the cost of living.

Anyway, getting back to that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: Pardon?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. FORSEY: Anyway, let's get back to when we passed some regulation. I just have to bring this up because the people of Central Newfoundland are disgruntled with this one as well: the helmets and the Side by Sides. They really are. They're disgruntled with that. We were duped, I believe was the word – we were duped because the regulations were supposed to come back and have changes for the helmets on the Side by Sides. We really believed that the helmets on the enclosed Side by Sides were going to be taken out; you didn't need to be wearing a helmet.

Now, with regard to quads, snowmobiles, the open vehicles – listen, we all believe in safety. We don't want anybody getting hurt. But what happened? They brought in the legislation. It is going to be out I think May 17 or May 19, one of it; I think it is May 17. In that, there will be full legislation that you will have to wear helmets on Side By Sides.

I think even the dealers – and I've gotten them from outside of my district, actually, some of the dealers – are disgruntled with the helmets on Side By Sides. They are. I've gotten emails. I've gotten calls. I am looking at two dealers that I can see now that are not in my district and I've gotten the calls on them. They believe that the sales might even decline on their Side By Sides.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: Future sales.

But anyway, that's it. Other than that: the cost of living and the economy, roads – I guess no one here would be able to stand up and they say they haven't got good roads, I suppose. I am sure Green Bay doesn't anymore because they've got a contract, I think, to get some roads done. I don't know, I've heard.

With regard to tourism in the district, there are options for tourism. But if we're going to develop tourism in the area, especially out around the bays, out around the coastal areas, we have to be able to get there. We really do. We have to be able to get to those areas. In order to get to them, we need the roads done.

There are lots of sections that are deplorable, in rough conditions, so we need more work on those districts. I took a drive last year down on Route 342. When you see all of the blacktop that's going down that way, b'y, it's disheartening. Even Route 360 seems to be getting developed down that way. It seems there is funding going down through Route 360. I'd like for Route 350, 351 and 352, of course, to see some attention. Hopefully that will happen when the Roads Plan comes out now, I think, in the next few days or whatever.

While I have a minute there, I'd just like to touch on more industry. We need industry, yeah. We need to look at the sealing industry. I think

there should be something done on the sealing industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: You say what's a fellow from Central Newfoundland doing up talking about seals? Well, when I see some pictures this time of year – I got a call from someone: Plea, there's actually a seal down in the Exploits River.

They're not down there eating capelin I tell you that. That tells me there are too many seals and we need to do something about it. We need an industry or something, really. There's not enough salt water for them, now they have to come up to fresh water, so we certainly need to address that.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, we'll have another –

SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand up in the House again and represent the District of Ferryland. I'm sure that they wouldn't want me standing up here and complimenting everything that's going on. You meet them and they say: Give it to them, Loyola.

I'm not about picking on anybody in particular, and don't take anything personal but they are after you to represent their district and what's going ahead and what's going on. That's why we're elected in here, to be able to have your voice and speak, and not just let it go through, or not just let it go through without something being said about it.

First of all, I'd like to start – I thought coming in here I'd do it a little different, and be able to do something different in government or do the best I can. I'm certainly doing the best I can, but when you get in here and see all the jobs that are given out to the Liberal supporters, I thought we would try to change and be different. Somebody has to start somewhere.

I just thought somebody would change it to be a little different and not give it to all your friends. That really bothers me. You hear it; I don't know who they are. Yes, I've heard some. I'm not going bringing up any names, obviously, but I would hope that we'd act a little better and do it properly, and be able to put it out so people could compete for a job, not be given a job.

I don't have to go any further than – we're after listening to it. I don't have to go repeat it in Central Newfoundland when they opened up an office. No one competed for that. They gave him the job and they knew what they were doing. They didn't compete for the job. Listen, it happened before me.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a political job.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, sure it's a political job but offer it to everybody. Don't just offer it to Liberals. Offer it to everybody.

We know this went on well before I got here. We're not going to change the world but we could be different. That's what you're trying to do is be different. But we're not trying to be any different; you're just going down the same road, over and over again.

We know what the sign means. Doing the same thing over and over, we know what that is. It would be nice, just once – I think one other government did it once, but we have not touched it. You continue to go down the same road.

An example would be the courthouse out in Stephenville - Port au Port. You have a courthouse out there that's 70 years old. You moved them into a 60-year-old building. Is that not political, to move it from Stephenville - Port au Port to Stephenville Crossing? Were there any consultations done with anybody in the industry? Did anybody speak to the MHA in Stephenville - Port au Port when you were moving this? Did they ask him if there is anywhere else in the community that could be done? No, they didn't ask; didn't ask anybody. So how was the decision made?

Again, we do the same political thing over and over again. So you get elected and just let it happen. I can't let it happen, I'm sorry; I can't let it go. Listen, I've been here for, I think, three

TI Ministers, two Education Ministers, three Municipal Ministers. So I'm not blaming it on any single minister, not one. But we just need some changes. People are tired of it. This is what people are tired of, it's the same stuff happening over and over and they're really fed up with it.

You get into the cost of living and we sit here – and I know that the budget was done and prepared at a time, April 7, I think was the date it had to be done. I'm sure that was done a couple of weeks before that because it all has to be put in the binders and printed and all that stuff. Before all that was printed, yeah, the price of gas was lower, so it's an exception. It's a unique situation, as the Member for Bell Island said. It's a unique situation that has happened in the last three to four weeks, maybe the last month, in the price of fuel. We can't seem to be able to do anything to alleviate it.

You had *The Way Forward*, you have *CHANGE is in the air*, *CHANGE starts here* and there's no change left in your pocket from what's going on here now – nothing. You have nothing left in your pocket. Listen, it's the general public that we're speaking about, they're the ones – read the papers, just listen.

I hate to talk about social media, but that's where it's to in regard to people messaging you to talk about fuel prices and what can you do.

There's a business I have in the Goulds area, a small business, they have 12 employees. That's a pretty big business, I think, 12 employees. They're not sure they're going to start up because of their fuel prices. Because when their fuel prices go up to them, then it gets passed on to the consumer and the price has to go up. Who else is going to pay for it if it's not the consumer? The price has to go up. So they just can't work, they can't start these businesses and not be able to charge more, and people are not going to pay more. They're going to sit here and wait. They're going to wait for the prices to go down.

I can give you a prime example, and it was my own. I have my deck tore off – when COVID started I tore my deck down at my house. I said I'll put that back. And then all of a sudden the price of lumber went right through the roof. And guess what? I don't have any deck there yet. So

that's two years ago. I thought I'd tear it down to get it back that summer and it's not back there yet.

So I'm feeling it. It's probably twice – yeah, it's probably twice the cost right now to put a deck back than what I had there, just for lumber prices alone.

I speak to people that are in all different industries, whether it be plumbing or carpentry work and all that stuff and the price of lumber – you could speak to the people that own some of these businesses, they will tell you well, they've have to buy it at that price, so they've got to charge it to the consumer.

It's gone down a bit, no question; it's gone down a bit but it's not gone back where it was. Now you have the fuel prices that are doing the same thing. People are feeling it.

Do you know what? I listened to the Member from Bell Island again today making some good points on the budget – there's lots of good stuff in that, there's no question, and it helps other people. But how can we help the people today or in the next two weeks, while the fuel prices are there? How can we help? What can we do to help them? What can we do?

We've got taxes that are going to increase in September. Well, I tell you, if you needed revenue in your budget, the first thing you would increase would be the price of fuel, it would be booze and it would be cigarettes, when you wanted to raise taxes and it would be in just like that.

If we had an election tomorrow – we nearly did when we voted the other night – or in a month's time, I guarantee you, we would do something about fuel; I would guarantee you, they'd be doing something. But they're doing nothing right now. They're going to say: \$142 million in and out, we increased their pensions or increase whatever. They got that increase, 10 per cent. Well, guess what? They're getting charged about 90 per cent more to pay for fuel.

They're totally reaching into their pockets and they've got nowhere to turn. It's affecting so many; everybody is affected. Every MHA in here has that issue. No question about it – every

MHA. And it just doesn't make any sense. We spent \$5 million on Rothschild, okay, and it's a secret. Yeah, we all know the secret.

Well, if I owned a car, or if I owned a house and I wanted to sell it, I'd put it out on the market and get the best value I could and not hide behind the numbers that somebody gave you. If I owned a car, I'd go to your dealership, I'd go to your dealership and I'd go to your dealership to get the best price you could. So if you've got a price, or you've got information, that's there and you think it's valuable, then you know where it stands. You know what dollar value you've got, and if you don't get it, then you don't sell it. That's where it's to. You don't just give it away. You're not giving it away, I understand that, and you've got information there, but people need to know.

You're not going to pay for something you don't know what it's worth. No question. And a car is a lot different than the stuff that you're getting evaluated. You're getting evaluated by a company in the states. We have all kinds of people here – I was at Estimates last night – that are accountants and whatever, looking at market value. You cannot tell me that somebody in this province can't do that job. You can't tell me: \$5 million and we have to give it to somebody in the United States.

That is preposterous for us to do that. We sit there and we let it go on, and maybe there's another phase to it, who knows. But to say that you're hiding it. It's \$4.4 million of the people's taxes and money that is here and you hide it and we can't look at it. It's incredible. It's hard to believe to be truthful.

I'm going to touch on my district a little bit. I wasn't going to spend as much time on that as I did, but I'm going to touch on my district a little bit. Again, I'm going to get down to some roads and maintenance. We all have the same issues. I'm looking at a road that is in St. Shott's that's 36 years old, and it's gone. There's no more patchwork can be done, it should be done. Again, as I said, I can't blame that minister, he's just here now less than a year, maybe a year, but we had two other ministers and we've had previous governments. It's something that should be looked at. It's a part of the Irish Loop and it definitely should be looked at.

I drove up there the other night, I left here, and I had to drive to Trepassey for a meeting. When I drove around the other end of Trepassey over by the gas station, on the far side, the alders were – and there are no leaves on the alders yet – out over the guardrail. I spoke to the minister on it. Hopefully, we can try to do something and get some brush cutting or do whatever.

But do you know what? They didn't grow there since last year. They've been there for a long time and they've grown out. As a matter of fact, there are signs there slow down or big turn and they're hid in the trees. When the trees get fully grown you can't even see the sign.

I can't blame the people in the department. In Trepassey, Renewes and Tors Cove, they're all in my area. I can't blame the workers. They can only do what they're supposed to do, what they're allowed to do and what they can do. So if you go out to do a guardrail, or you go out to do some ditching, you have five people, possibly, that you're going to need to be able to do that. When you get to the summer hours, when it's the time to do it, now they're all cut back, they're on summer hours so they won't have as many people working. So you need a person on signs on both ends, when you have a backhoe that may be on the side of the road ditching. You have somebody driving the dump truck, somebody driving the backhoe. You need, possibly, five people. You cannot fix this problem if you don't have people to do it.

We all know that's an issue in every district. I'm after driving a few districts, down to Harbour Breton. We went down to Point Leamington. We went to Twillingate, 22 kilometres of road I clocked off that was paved down there, when we were going down. All new blacktop. Not even in my district. I was down there, 22 kilometres paved. We'd like to see it shared out a little better. I know they had a five-year plan, now it's gone. They're gone another way.

Some of this brush cutting and ditching and all the stuff that TI can do, there are better ways to get it done. You can't lay off the people, go on summer hours, have less people and be able to get it done. I had this happen this year, that when they got back on winter hours, they start hiring in October. Luckily enough, we didn't have a lot of snow or very little in October or

November. We didn't get our two final placements until December. Again, he has just started and took over this in a year. But these placements, I call it – and it's not acceptable.

If they had a big snowstorm – they had three people. They had two more that needed to be hired and it took them two months to do it. I don't know what you call it – government red tape. I have no idea what you call it but it should be more efficient than that to be able to get these people to work quicker. They had people that were waiting on these jobs, hopefully. They left and went away to Alberta. They didn't get hired. They ended up working up there for two months and came back and the job still wasn't filled. It is incredible how long they waited to be able to fill them.

I'll touch on some of the volunteers in our area as well. This is volunteer appreciation week and I'll just touch on some of them. When you mention some, you may miss some. So if I do miss some, I apologize in advance in case I do. I have the Lions Club in Goulds and Trepassey, Knights of Columbus, Kinsman; you got volunteer fire departments all through the district, Girl Guides, Scouts, 4-H clubs. We have 50-plus clubs, as an example.

Fifty-plus clubs are big in my district. There is one in the Goulds, there is one in Witless Bay and there is one in Trepassey. They are very active. I can tell you my parents are in it. They play cards once a week. They have crafting. They try to get over there as much as they can. It is affecting them when they have to drive. If they want to go to a luncheon and they want to drive – they all meet in Ferryland – well, they're deciding if they're going to go. There is a lot of gas involved; it is a half hour, 45-minute run. Hopefully they will take a bus but they still have to pay for that. Or they might decide to take a bus – not hopefully take a bus; it might be cheaper on everybody. But I'm sure that cost is getting passed on to them as well.

This year in the district we have Come Home Years. I'm going to say I have four Come Home Years. There is one in Witless Bay, there is one in Cape Broyle, there is one in Calvert and there is one in St. Shott's. I'm sure that other communities and towns are all having events for Come Home Year. They might not be having a

Come Home Year, but they're having events in their communities. It is good to see. They're getting invites for all those and hopefully be able to attend some of the functions at all of them; it's going to be a pretty busy summer.

I look forward to people coming home and being able to go to these and we get back to where we were two or three years ago, that you'd be able to go to some of these functions, just socialize and be able to deal with people. I really look forward to that. Hopefully the government hasn't got all the bands hired for all their Come Home events, that you can't get someone at all these. On the Southern Shore there's lots of entertainment and lots of people that can entertain, so I'm sure they've got big plans going on.

They've been planning now – two of these Come Home Years have been planned for 2½ years. They were going to have their own Come Home Year, it just happened to tie in with the province, which I'm going to say is probably pretty lucky that happened. Not lucky that it got cancelled but lucky that it would go ahead during the Come Home Year. It's a big major event.

Also in the district, I'd like to thank – I mean, we all are after doing it and I certainly don't want to be remiss by not doing it – all the doctors and nurses, the first responders, the truck drivers and police officers, as well, in the district and all over the Island for their help during COVID and all that they've done. It's unbelievable what people have done during this pandemic. It can't be going without being said.

I've looked back to some of the stuff that went on with teachers. My son-in-law is a teacher and my daughter is a teacher who happens to be off. At the last part, when COVID just started to – I'm not going to say end, but when COVID started to ease restrictions, they were coaching teams. So if they coached a team and left to go to, say, Corner Brook, or Baie Verte - Green Bay or wherever it may be, when they were going to coach now they were told that if they take these days off, they lose their time. They're going to lose a couple of annual days' holidays –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Oh yes, absolutely. They were told that.

Now, didn't get to be a big issue – and they're volunteering their time, they're coaching their teams in their school. But when they were leaving, they were told if they – and the reason was because there's a shortage of substitute teachers and if they took time, then it was hard to fill these positions. Now, whether that was or it wasn't, I just said, well now they're losing their volunteer base from teachers that want to help out the kids.

They're in the school for the right reasons to help these kids get to these sporting events or whatever it may be, it could be gymnastics – whatever it is. But for that to happen, it was a bit discouraging when I was told that. I haven't dug into it too much, but hopefully that goes back to where it was next year. I guess that's their thoughts. I didn't get many calls on it but when I heard it I said, well, that doesn't sound right. So hopefully it will get back to that.

Again, I'll touch on the cellphone coverage in the district. I left the other night; I drive, I go through. I lose it in Middle Pond driving before I get home; I lose it between Tors Cove and Cape Broyle. I leave that and I lose it going up Cape Broyle hill. I lose it going through just outside Ferryland to go to Aquaforte. When I get to Renew, get past Renew and go to Cappahayden, it's gone for 15 minutes; if you get a good spot you might get it.

As well all know, we try to answer some calls while we're driving, but it's near impossible because your call is never going to be five minutes or 10 minutes. Sometimes it's longer than that and you think you'd knock some of them off your list to try to make some calls back because you haven't got them all called back. It's a bit discouraging that more hasn't been done but hopefully, as the Member for Bell Island said, they made this big announcement, let's see you get some of this action, get back and get some more action in there.

Again, I'll touch on it: ATVS. We were duped; there's no question. We had an agreement here that they would look at it in regulations. A lot of people spoke. I know that there were different Members, Humber - Bay of Islands, Terra Nova,

Exploits. I think Grand Falls spoke on it. They're mainly the areas that these ATVs are being run, and they have a trail system, unlike where I'm to. There are Side By Sides there, but it's not really a trail system. If you go off the track then you could go down in the bog and never get a Side By Side out, but they're built for these trails.

These people were speaking from knowledge. They gave the information that needed to be given here for the government to look at and to make their adjustments. They said they would and then they turned around to tell us it's going to be in regulations. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands did say that he wanted it in the legislation. I understand now why he wanted it, because now it's all changed. Whether we would have lost the vote or not, it probably wouldn't have mattered, but we did have an agreement before we left that that was going to be done. I know that the Member for Exploits touched on it as well.

Again, I don't get a lot. I don't own one; I've been in one. To say with the headrests that are on them and the roll cages – I have a buddy that has one down the road from me, and he'll take his helmet and he'll wear it if he has to, but he's only putting a bowl on his head. He's not putting these big helmets on. It's unsafe when you have these helmets. It's a bit of an unsafe practice.

They wouldn't be telling you that if it wasn't the case. The people that own them are telling you that. Not the people who are selling them, not the government. It's the people that own them. So some of these people that are making these regulations, yes, I know they go to all the associations and they listen to the ATV association and whatever groups that are involved. They speak to them, but I think it was a wrong decision and, hopefully, we'll see it in regulations that it won't be there.

Thank you, again. Thanks for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It's moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 9, at 1:30 p.m.

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