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*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6 p.m.

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

House Leaders ready?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Concurrence on the Resource Committee.

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

**L. PARROTT:** He's a much better Cabinet Minister than he is House Leader.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's a compliment.

**L. PARROTT:** Take it the right way.

It's always an honour to stand and talk on behalf of the people of Terra Nova and certainly the province. When we talk about the Resource Committee, I would say most Cabinet positions, they're not all equal, and two Cabinet Ministers in the Resource Committee got an enviable post, I would think. That's Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and Industry, Energy and Technology. It's a pretty exciting time to be involved in either one of those departments.

Not to say that the fiscal environment out there reflects that, but the reality of it is, is that between our mining sector, the recent announcement on Bay du Nord, the new legislation on wind energy, the future looks bright certainly for Industry, Energy and Technology and, obviously, the steps that we're taking towards green energy is huge.

The same thing goes for Tourism. One of the larger portfolios in the province with regard to what it does for the economy; they've had a rough couple of years, but it looks like with Come Home Year, some investment in, certainly, cultural areas, it looks like they're on the rebound. Two great departments.

I'll take a bit of time and I'm just going to go through some of the departments and add some input that I have. The first thing I'd say, I'd like

to talk about Industry, Energy and Technology. I will start off by commending the minister responsible for bringing Bay du Nord across the finish line, but there's still a lot of work to be done. Obviously, he and I agree on this. It's okay to say that the project is sanctioned and it may move forward; what we got to start doing now is making sure that work carries out here.

The initial agreement allotted for 5,000 metric tons, and most people don't understand what that means, but 5,000 metric tons simply equals almost nothing. We need way more than that, right. So we ought to be looking for the mechanical outfitting to be completed here; we ought to be looking for a lot of the construction to be carried out here; and we really, really need to be employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first on this project.

The 5,000 metric tons probably equals some of the chains and anchors, maybe a helideck, flair boom and one or two lifeboat stations. The reality is that there is a substantial amount of other work that has to happen. Now, I fully agree when people say the hull can't be done here and the hull cannot be done here. But much like the *Terra Nova*, the hull can be done and brought here and fit out here. There is no reason why we shouldn't be doing that work; we have the men and women in this province that are capable of doing that work. We have the knowledge, and it is knowledge, I will say, that this government worked very hard on, and the previous government, to make sure we had, both with female apprentice programs and apprenticeship programs for our own men and women.

Now, in 2019, first when I came to this House, I had the honour to stand up to present a private Member's motion on Newfoundland and Labrador first – 2019. Here we are in 2022 and to my knowledge we're no further ahead. I would say that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, in his mandate letter it says that is his responsibility. A couple of weeks ago I talked to the building trades and I do know, up until that point, they had not heard from him. That's just not good enough, not with a project like this coming online. It is extremely important that we get a Newfoundland and Labrador benefits package.

**E. LOVELESS:** Who were you talking to?

**L. PARROTT:** Pardon me?

**E. LOVELESS:** Who were you talking to?

**L. PARROTT:** I'll tell you after. We can talk after.

At that point, like I said, they said that they hadn't been approached by the minister.

When we look at projects that happen in this province, we overlook some stuff, right. So the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology talked about Voisey's Bay last week, and he has a right to be bullish on Voisey's Bay. The agreement that is signed with Tesla is great for this province; it is great for the men and women that work there. What I will say about Voisey's Bay that dismays me is that if you ever get the opportunity to visit and you look around, you will quickly see that almost every licence plate up there is a Quebec licence plate. It is absolutely ridiculous. We could not go in to Quebec and do the same thing as Newfoundlanders. It is long overdue for that to end.

The other thing I'll say is that when the *Umiak* comes down with her product and she dumps it off in Long Harbour, her next stop is Quebec City. All the goods and services that go into Voisey's Bay come out of Quebec. Again, something that we would not be able to do, which makes no sense and government has the ability to intervene in that. I'd be curious to know what kind of taxes they pay, how they work all of that, but the reality of it is that it does not benefit us and it benefits Quebec in a big way.

So when you have contractors coming in and they are utilizing their own vehicles or you have site service vehicles that are up there and they are all out of Quebec, think of the registrations, the insurance, all of that money that should be coming into provincial coffers, it just doesn't happen. I believe that if someone was to look into the act you would find that if a vehicle comes to Newfoundland from another province for any duration, they have two weeks, I believe, in order to switch the plates and the registration

and everything over. These vehicles have been up there forever. It should be the same. It should be the same. They should be registered in Newfoundland, insured in Newfoundland and we should be reaping the benefits for a project and a site that is right here in Newfoundland.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Where would the fuel be bought?

**L. PARROTT:** All from Quebec. The fuel all comes from Quebec. As a matter of fact, I believe, all of the fuel for the three thermal generation plants also comes from Quebec.

Now there is an exciting bit of news out of Voisey's Bay and that is the idea of wind generation up there. So very exciting that they have the opportunity to do it. My understanding is that it will equal somewhere between 12 and 13 per cent of total power generated. It's a substantial project. When that project goes forward, that should put into perspective exactly what it takes to make wind work because, you know, it's a fairly large project and it is still only going to account for 12 to 13 per cent of the required power up there.

But make no mistake about it, Voisey's Bay is a great project, certainly, with the extension that is currently happening right now. It is employing lots of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and it's going to add life on to that project, which is huge; very important because we need all of the work that we can get here.

Bay du Nord is a seriously good first step here for Newfoundland and Labrador, but it creates a lot of questions. I questioned from day one what we are trading off. Now government says we are not trading off anything, but with the rebranding of NOIA; the rebranding of the C-NLOPB, all suspect, all right around the same time; the delay in seismic; the delay in the land sales, it all creates a lot of questions.

Now, all of those questions seemed to be answered by the minister, up until the federal minister of Environment spoke out. When the federal minister of Environment spoke out and he started talking about regulations and how it

would be tough to get another project, it set off an alarm in my head which really should not have been set off because we sat here in 2019 and debated federal legislation, the new legislation for regulations for offshore work. It was four separate bills. And this government was bullish on it. They stood up and they said this is the greatest legislation that ever come about. It is going to reduce the regulatory period from 900 days down to months. It's going to allow our oil and gas to succeed and excel; it highlighted *Advance 2030*. All we heard was all about what the former government done.

It is funny how the Environment Minister is over there chatting. We never heard him say a word during Bay du Nord.

Minister Guilbeault stood up last week and he said: It will be extremely hard, under this new legislation, for any other oil and gas projects to get sanctioned. Now we heard in this House, over a long debate, that the new legislation would make it much easier. It was this government that told us that, especially the former minister, current Deputy Premier, stood up and touted this legislation, how it was the greatest thing ever. Now we're being told that this great legislation is the very legislation that's going to handcuff us.

We haven't heard anything from government, but, obviously, we will know where we stand with regard to our oil and gas. I would suspect some time in the next two or three months, if our land sales don't get sanctioned, if we don't move forward with that, if there's not a plan to move forward with seismic, if we don't push forward with the LNG at Grassy Point, all of the things that we need in order to make our oil and gas industry successful; if we don't see any of those things, the needle move on any of them, then we'll know that government sold out. I suspect we'll know that before the end of this summer. I suspect we already know the answer, but we'll find out, I guess, in a couple of months. The reality is we should not have given anything up for Bay du Nord to move forward.

Labrador West, so we hear our colleague from the NDP – who doesn't support oil for the record – talk about Labrador West, certainly the seniors' problems and everything else that's

going on up there. But the reality of it is that the royalties that have come from IOC, Wabush Mines and Tacora, and certainly the tax money that is coming from the individuals that have worked up there since the early '60s, ought to have brought Labrador West much further than it is.

We shouldn't hear about seniors – actually, last week, if you watched the news, there was a minister from, I believe, the Anglican Church, I'm not sure, but he came on and he was very clear that seniors in Labrador West are afraid to go visit their doctors. Afraid to go to the doctor because they're afraid that they may be put into long-term care and they'd be shipped out of there. Imagine being afraid to go see your doctor if you're not feeling well. That's exactly what they're saying.

**B. DAVIS:** That's fear mongering.

**L. PARROTT:** Give us the definition of fear mongering there, Minister of Environment. We can hear you pretty clear over here; speak up. The truth doesn't matter sometimes to you either.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** When a senior is any part of the province is afraid to go see their doctor because they're afraid that they may be shipped somewhere, that's not fear mongering. That's a reality. I suspect that if the Minister of Environment had an opportunity to talk to my father before he passed away, he would have found out it is real. I suspect if someone from that government took the time to call Cheryl Hardy's daughter, Angela, they'd find out that her situation is real. I suspect if they took the time to call the minister who was on the news last week to find out exactly what he was talking about, when he's talking about his parishioners coming in saying that they have real fear, he'd clearly understand that this isn't fear mongering. It's simply stating the facts – simply stating the facts.

Mr. Speaker, the Resource Committee is very encompassing of a lot of different things, so the next thing I'd like to talk about, just touch on, is

the fishery. So throughout my district the fishery is fairly large. I have multiple fish plants and we fish most species. A very lucrative fishery and it's working very well. There are lots of things that happen that don't work well, as we talked about last week, certainly these trip quotas and things with the crab. There are lots of questions about trip quotas when we're actually shipping crab in to be processed and we're telling our own fishermen that they can't get their crab processed.

I understand why the unions would be asking questions. Certainly, the reality of it is, they want to get their quotas caught but they're getting turned away at the wharf because they either have too much product or there's product coming from another province. At the end of the day, we ought to be looking after our own resources first and at every opportunity, whether it be in the fishery, or logging, or oil and gas, or mining; we ought to be trying to do the secondary processing here as much as we can. Crab is a great example; secondary processing should be happening here on a regular basis.

The other thing that we always see about the fishery is the sustainability of a cod plant, a cod fishery. Now, we understood what happened when the war happened in Russia, we had one of our plants here have to look for a different product; they had to go to a different location in the world in order to get enough cod to keep the plant running on an almost-annual basis. We have a great resource here; we just have got to find a way that we utilize it the right way. And part of that is to make sure that we regulate how cod is fished, so we've got quota going into that plant on an annual basis. Too much all at once doesn't do anyone any favours, from the offshore or inshore or mid-shore.

Wind power and solar power – and it's great to see the legislation just changed on wind power. It's an exciting time in the world and we all understand that we have to transition into a green economy. I would say, as a father of two young children, 16 and 14, as much as I tout oil and gas, I believe that our green future is one of the most important things that we need to be looking at, but I also believe that we have to find a way to transition into that and the utilization of oil and gas is the way that we need to do that. That's our silver bullet. At the end of the day,

we understand our debt load; the way for us to pay for that debt is to utilize the resources we have.

When we talk about wind, one of the things that always bewilders me is we have a great ability to harness the wind and use wind energy, but what we don't allow people to do is put energy back into the grid in any kind of a substantive amount.

We talk about a transition. If we want to transition, we ought to let people chart their own path. There are lots of businesses out there that would love to utilize alternative power sources and take what they don't use and put back into the grid. For some reason, we don't do that, and everywhere else in the world, that's the standard. We really, really, really need to do that much sooner than later.

The reality of it is it will give us excess power. We talk about the mining industry and the things that are happening in the mining industry, which is incredibly exciting, make no mistake about it. When we look at gold and nickel and uranium and iron ore and all of the things that are happening here in Newfoundland, it's massive. But we also have to have enough electricity to start those mines. That's going to become a problem in short time. There's no question about it. We need to find a way to allow people to start putting power back into the grid and utilizing the power we have also to sell offshore.

Bit mining, if you look at any of our hydroelectric facilities around the province, we ought to do data mining and bit mining around all of them; very close proximity, lower power. I talk to people at least on a weekly, basis, who have a very serious interest in coming to Newfoundland and Labrador and taking advantage of it, but they can't get the power. It's just not accessible for them to do it.

Now there was a group in Labrador West, it failed, unfortunately, but again it had to do with power and location and all that good stuff. At the end of the day, we should have these operations next to every single major power producer that we have: Bay d'Espoir, Churchill Falls, Muskrat Falls. People would come if the power was there; they'd come take it, there's no question. They're looking for more power than

we can supply and it's important that we look that way.

I'd like to just circle back on LNG. We all know that there's a proposal out there now for LNG, it's for Grassy Point. It's an LNG transshipment terminal. Basically, what they want to do is they want to take advantage of all the LNG that's offshore, the trillions and trillions of cubic feet of LNG, liquid natural gas, and they want to bring it in to land, put it in a shipping container, liquefy, send it off and power the world.

Now, nothing has highlighted the need for this anymore than Russia's invasion of the Ukraine. Now we can talk all about geopolitical atmosphere and everything that happens, but Russia right now supplies Europe with LNG, a substantial amount and a sole source. There's nowhere else to go except there to get it.

We have energy to power the world and also to help us transition; not just us transition, but to help the world transition. LNG is much cleaner. It will hopefully then not be flared off offshore in different oilfields, that it also creates the ability to have green and blue hydrogen. So there is a big opportunity there, but there is a lot of work to be done.

The people that are interested in it, they've got a proposal in place and they are going through an environmental process right now. But government needs to be bullish on this; the amount of work that it is going to create and what it can do for the world is huge. I understand environmentalists talking about the carbon effect of LNG, but you need to consider what the carbon effect of not using LNG is. The reality of it is that LNG replaces coal, oil and much dirtier fuel sources.

So it's a transition; it's not the answer, it's a way to get to the answer. It's what we don't do well as Newfoundlanders; we don't take advantage of the things we have. I have always said for a long time, we're a province that has it all and we don't know what to do with it. We've proven that time and time again. Sadly, we shouldn't prove it time and time again. When we make the first mistake, we shouldn't make the second mistake. But in some instances we make the same mistake two or three times and it is just not acceptable.

Right now, with our offshore oil and gas, I think LNG is the next step. It is the metamorphosis in where we have come from and where we have to go and we really, really need to look at it.

Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, you know, it is great to see, I said earlier, about the investment in NASCAR and different things. I think that's great; I understand what investment does. My question on all of that was the timing, and for good reason, because of the financial crunch. Hopefully, the investment pays off and it pays back the way that government suspects and we're all proven wrong. The reality of it is that people are hurting right now, but if you look at our film industry, you look at our tourism industry and you look at what is happening in this province, it's pretty exciting.

My colleague for Bonavista, I'm sure he could get up and speak more eloquently about it than me. I'm fortunate enough to have the Eastport Peninsula in my district and the Bonavista Peninsula I think are two great examples to the province when it comes to tourism industry and what they have managed to do and how they have harnessed it. If we can do that as a province, the results will be incredible. Make no mistake about it, if you go to Bonavista or Eastport – and people travel from St. John's to go out, certainly, to Bonavista for a day trip just to have a beer and eat and they turn around and they drive back.

That tells you exactly what they're doing with their product and how they're selling their location, it is incredible and all of Newfoundland could be like that. We just have to find a way to make it happen. We can make it happen, make no mistake about it. People want to see what we have here.

I tell you what, go anywhere else in Canada where you can see icebergs and prairies and mountains and whales and bears and polar bears and this week a walrus – and the Minister of Tourism – we can see all kinds of different things here. It's really exciting what's happening in Newfoundland.

**S. CROCKER:** Did you call me a walrus?

**L. PARROTT:** No, I did not. No, I did not call you a walrus.

Anyhow, listen, there are exciting times coming. We're at a tough time right now and, at the end of the day, we need to find a way through, but I believe brighter days are ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I wasn't going to speak during this Committee, but I feel I need to now, listening to my colleague from Terra Nova.

I just wanted to provide a little balance to some of his comments. Like himself, I'm very concerned about his children as well. I have tabled in this House of Assembly a private Member's resolution really calling on the government, calling on the province, calling on everyone to recognize what's going on around us. I'm just going to sort of walk through the premise of these points. For those that are listening, hopefully, you'll hear some words that you agree with and for those who are not sure, maybe you'll learn a little bit.

I wanted to start off – the entire world, including the Member for Terra Nova, have acknowledged that the world is heating up dramatically, quickly. Twenty-eight years from now, our own government – and I look to the minister responsible for Climate Change, his own department and even when I sat there – we have calculated, we have predicted that within 28 years from now, it will be 3.4 degrees warmer here in St. John's than preindustrial levels. In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, where I live, it's going to be six degrees warmer. In Nain, by 2050, it will be 7.3 degrees warmer.

He made a reference to the walrus that we had in Middle Cove. It is really interesting to see that, but the fact of the matter is that walrus probably came south on ice flow that is a result of a warming northern system. We are losing more and more ice off the Greenland system. We used to have glaciers in Labrador. We essentially have none left. Dr. Robert Way who has been

doing his Ph.D. on glaciology – there's really nothing left. We are cooking.

Unfortunately, here comes our province now at a point in time where we have this fiscal crisis, we have a climate change crisis and, frankly, as a province, we have a demographic crisis in that we've got such a concentration of people here in the St. John's area. We're developing great resource projects in Labrador West, in Voisey's Bay and other parts of our province and we just have a very challenging situation.

So I get it, I know why the desire is there to try and get more projects going like Equinor's Bay du Nord, but at the same point I've got to say the timing is unfortunate for us. We really need to park it, leave it in the ground. And what I've been talking about doing is copying what the European Union is doing right now.

Essentially what they do, they've created a fund that recognizes the just transition and the struggles that it will take. You know, we're in the news right now with Fortis. Just last week we had protesters here from other parts of the world who are facing shutdowns of the coal mining operations that Fortis oversees. There's no question, this is a great challenge; however, there are strategies to deal with it; there can be financial support that's made available. I only have to go to Poland right now, which the EU has identified as a country that's heavily dependent on coal and will need that financial support.

So of their just-transition fund in euros, a vast chunk of it, a huge chunk of it is being allocated right now to support Poland in getting off the coal mining industry and getting on to greener sources of alternative energy and so on. And given the embargo that's going on right now, that the world is rejecting Russian oil and so on, they're going to need to identify other energy sources, so it's good to see.

That's the case I've been making. If Canada is serious about making progress on our commitments, not only to ourselves but to the world – by the way, Canada is supposed to be a leader in concern for the environment, coming forward with legislation, but we keep going forward with industrial initiatives in support of the oil and gas sector.

Bought a pipeline, approved Equinor's Bay du Nord Project, these are backwards steps from the transition we keep talking about.

You know, I'm 60 years of age, 28 years from now I'll be 88. Hopefully, I'll be around to see this, but boy oh boy, I think about these younger generations that are coming up and what kind of Earth are they going to face? We really need to create a legacy now that can give them a chance of having an Earth that they can actually inhabit. So we're collectively, around the world, trying to set the limit of how much carbon dioxide we're putting into the atmosphere.

Some of you may have seen a little video I did a while ago, and I get some of the messaging around government's approach to –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of conversation is a bit too loud; I can't hear the speaker.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville

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

I wanted to make a comment around – I did a little video the other day and I talked about the environmental advantage that is associated with the Bay du Nord Project. There's no question there is some advantage, but you can quickly lose track of what we are talking about. If I can just simplify it for folks here on the floor. Essentially, the arguments the government is making is that the extraction, the amount of energy it takes to extract oil from the fields off our coast is actually much less energy and could be done with the high technology that's available. I have got to credit Equinor and all of the other developments in the offshore. We have certainly led the pack.

So that's what we are talking about. We're talking about that incremental piece of energy that we need to extract, and compared to – I'm thinking it is in the vicinity of – now I have got to recall my numbers – I just ran upstairs to get my papers – but it is in the vicinity of something like seven kilograms per barrel, something like

that. It's a very small amount versus 14 for sort of a typical offshore operation, versus, I think, in the vicinity of 77 or something like that for our northern oil sands projects in Alberta.

You can see that is where the environmental advantage is, but the problem is, is that for every barrel of oil, and that represents – I wish I had my numbers in front of me – but for every barrel of oil and its mass, when you consume that oil – this is the problem – that comes from Hibernia, it is just as carbon dioxide emitting as any other barrel of oil that is out there. There is some slight ranges and so on, but, essentially, when you consume that barrel of oil, you will produce 3½ times its weight in pollution.

When you start to calculate what we are leaving for our future generations – yeah, we have a great debt right now and we have to do something about it, but I have calculated that if we take a look at the Bay du Nord Project and that's just at the low end of the situation, the low end of the scale, that 300-million barrels of oil that we hope to extract, that is on the low side because it could be as high as a billion; we will stick with the numbers, the 300-million barrels. That would represent 146 million tons of greenhouse gases.

If you take that to the federal government's commitment right now and the carbon tax that everyone is preoccupied with, that's going to represent – once that is fully implemented – some \$24.8 billion of pollution penalties that our future generations are going to have to pay for – almost \$25 billion in pollution. We are saying do you know what kids, 28 years from now, you are going to have a hell of a situation to deal with.

That's what I'm talking about and that's the kind of challenge that we have. So I get it. I get why we have to do what we can.

The other problem that we have with the Bay du Nord Project, by the way, is the International Energy Agency. This is a group, Canada's a part of it, all the oil and gas producing nations are a part of it, and it consists of environment and natural resource industry ministers representing it. They have identified that by 2024, we



essentially need no more oil fields. It's time to stop.

Bay du Nord, and the most ambitious of schedules and so on, won't be available until 2028. And that's why you saw that strong reaction. While there was celebration – and I get the euphoria of the environmental assessment clearance that occurred the other day from Ottawa – but the fact of the matter is so many people are saying do you know what? It's going to come so late. And it's just a crying shame that we didn't have this opportunity years ago. Here it is.

So that's why I'm saying, Mr. Prime Minister and Cabinet and federal government, we are in a situation where we are so fiscally strapped, we really need and have to go. And I respect greatly the Member for Terra Nova because he says this is going to be important for future generations, and, yeah, it will create that GDP. But, unfortunately, it's going to come so late we're going to stick them with that great pollution bill.

So I'm saying let's go to Ottawa. We'll negotiate; we've got a proven field, this is not just like some whimsical speculative situation, we have a project, well designed, with at least 300-million barrels of oil, with the environmental clearance. This has great value. We, as a jurisdiction, could leave it in the ground and Mr. Prime Minister, in recognition of that, that is what's called a reverse offset.

You see it now in other jurisdictions. New Brunswick right now, for example, is setting up situations where there are large reserves of forest that aren't harvested. It's recognized how many tons of carbon dioxide, of greenhouse gas emissions, wood – actually these trees growing – can actually absorb from the atmosphere. That's got value in it. You can actually calculate.

Similarly, that field has great value. And if Canada is serious about trying to make progress on this climate crisis that we're all facing, and we see the signals every single day, and I've got to say, with the four of us who represent Labrador, we are really seeing this now. The proof is in the pudding.

I get the desperation of us, I get the excitement of this project; I just wish it had come earlier. But I'm still saying to the prime minister, we are a jurisdiction that could use some support, just like Poland is being supported right now by the European Union.

With that, Speaker, I've made my point.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

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

Just a few things with regard to Environment and Climate Change, Fisheries, and Immigration on this issue. I'll start off with Climate Change. I think in many ways we're going to have to address this.

I don't know if you were looking at today's *Telegram* – I won't refer to the walrus, but certainly in the United States and Western, in Colorado, they have – and I'll read here if I may: We have never taken this step before. These reservoirs are at the lowest they've been since they've been constructed. And we're never going to see these reservoirs filled again.

The Western United States has experienced the driest period on record over the past two decades. If you've listened to the news, too, you know that in India, across the country, they've had temperatures of 50 degrees Celsius; that is 122 degrees Fahrenheit. It's affecting crops; it's affecting the ability for even human survivability in certain cities.

Here, closer to home, this past summer was the driest on record, we had drought which, basically, virtually, wiped out grain crops in the United States and in Western Canada. I don't need to remind us of the forest fires, the heat dooms and so on and so forth.

What does that mean for Newfoundland? Well, the warning signs are there. We have renewable industries here, Speaker, whether it's the cod fishery, the crab, scallops, you name it. We've got to address it. How we address it is another matter, but we've got to address the fact that our own renewable resources here are put in

jeopardy. So climate change is something that we've got to address and we've got to start addressing it now.

Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture: I wanted to speak about aquaculture, in particular. It's interesting that on March 22, we had, in the Mowi facilities in Stephenville, another 2.26 million salmon in a hatchery that will have to be destroyed.

Now, I've spoken here. I'm not a proponent of open-sea pen aquaculture; it's risking basically our wild salmon stocks on the South Coast. There has to be a way to have closed containment systems that basically protect our other resources, the other groundfish that are in the area. If we're going to have finfish aquaculture, then we have to find either a way to make them land based or to have them in closed containment.

But the fact is, that even in this situation, extreme water temperatures have actually killed off all the salmon in these pens. We're not talking about hundreds of thousands; we're talking about millions.

The other part of it is, too, if I remember correctly, with the aquaculture, we ship most of the fish out head on, gutted: 80 per cent. If we're going to go down this road, there has to be some way that we can maximize the production. If we're going to carry on with open-sea pen aquaculture, then there has to be some way to maximize production of secondary process so that we're actually employing more people here. That we're keeping the production and the secondary processing right here.

I know it has been said, well, that'll never work; Newfoundland is too far from markets; we'll never do it as cheaply. Well, no matter where we are, no matter what industry we take on here, we're too far from markets. But there has to be some way, Speaker. If we're looking in the resource at maximizing the value, let's find a way to make sure that the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians get the maximum amount of value of, especially, our renewable resources.

The last comment I'll make is certainly with regards to Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. It is about how do we attract people to

stay here and bring them here? Again, I am going to bring this up: if you're bringing people to this province, give anyone enough time and people will want to stay here. But in many cases, as I have spoken to people in the community, many of the immigrants will actually move on. They're going to go to a larger centre.

But there are groups here who are trying to build a community so we have to focus on that and we have to put the supports in place. Which is why I am hoping that when it comes to the newcomers, whether they be Syrian, Afghan or Ukrainian, that we find ways that we put the resources into it. Let me rephrase it, to invest the resources in these people so that they will stay here. Maybe there are ways that we can use the tax system, or look at that to encourage people, to attract bright young minds to settle here.

But those are some of the issues, as I sat in mostly on Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; Environment; and Fisheries. I think we've got a bit of work ahead of us, but I do believe, as other Members have said here, that Newfoundland and Labrador does have a bright future. It's my home. I'm hoping that my daughter who's now doing her fellowship in Calgary will come back here and find a place here for her. That's what I want.

I'm hoping that my children will never have to move out of here. But I know that the pull is there. Nevertheless, to me, it's about making this – I'm 62. In 20 years – well, if I still have my mind with me –

**P. DINN:** That's debatable.

**J. DINN:** That's debatable now.

**P. DINN:** I can get away with that.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Said your older brother.

**J. DINN:** Said my older-looking brother.

So to me, I've never had any desire to move out of here, this is my home. I will do what it takes to make sure that it's a home for my children and for the children in other families. It's important to me that we have a bright future and I think we also need to look at making it a sustainable future as well.

And that way, whatever perspective we're coming at it from, I do believe that's the common thing that unites us. We are after the same thing. We just have a different perspective on how to get there.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Report of Resource Estimates Committee, carried.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that we move to Concurrence debate for the Government Services Committee.

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

**P. PIKE:** Just quickly, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Standing Committee for Government Services for the great job they did during Estimates. Thank you for the opportunity to Chair those meetings. We look after Consolidated Fund Services, Department of Finance, Public Service Commission, Transportation and Infrastructure, Public Procurement and Digital Government.

I would like to thank the minister, the minister's officials and, of course, our Committee Members for a great job during Estimates. In all cases, the questions were very pertinent and when asked for clarification, it was given. Certainly, the two parties and the independent Members had an opportunity to ask questions and to question ministers and their officials.

I feel this is a very important process and very necessary, as the accountability of the success of any government – it strengthens the people's faith in the democratic system by getting answers to their questions.

That is all I have to say, Mr. Speaker, on that.

Thank you.

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

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

I, too, want to thank all of the Members of the Committee and all of the hard-working people of the public service who actually put this budget together and make it a lot easier for us, when we asked questions to get answers and to go through the entire process.

I'm going to start off – because Finance gives me an opportunity to talk about lots of departments and because, obviously, every department requires money to help them run.

My colleague from Bonavista, this morning, in his passion about the challenges that he was having with Crown lands in his district, all so real and all so hard to understand that we can't find a way to fix them that would help these people. But he never got a chance to follow up on his second passion – or his first passion, I am not sure which – which is the fishery.

And, of course, I have said this before in the House and I will continue to say it, when we joined Canada in 1949 we brought the richest fishing grounds in the world to the country of Canada and their standing as a fishing country went up significantly because of it. I will continue to stand in this House and say that the principal beneficiary of our fishing resources should be the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now someone might ask me: Why are you so passionate about the fishery? My first job was in the fishery. I was in grade seven, but no, I

wasn't on a schooner or out on the boats. I was going door to door –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Some might think I was. Some might think that.

However, I will let you know that I had a wheelbarrow and in my wheelbarrow I had fresh fish because my uncle was a full-time fisherman and my father was a part-time fisherman. When they would come home after they sold so much to the plant, they would keep so much to salt. But as a young man sitting home there, they would give me fresh fish to go door to door in my hometown of Placentia and sell them. A dollar for a large one, head on; 50 cents for the small one and I would go.

But there's a caveat. The first \$10 I made, I had to give it back to my father and my uncle. The reason I had to give it back to them was because they went to the liquor store and bought the bottle of whiskey. But I didn't mind that because, at the end of the day, while they were having a few nips, as they continued to filet to get ready to salt the fish, the more nips they had, the less they wanted to salt, which meant there was more fish for me and my wheelbarrow to go door to door selling. So, at the end of the day, it was a great way – my first lesson in business.

My father was the son of a fisherman. My mother was the daughter of a fisherman. They were born in Petite Forte, grew up in Petite Forte and, obviously, my dad wound up leaving when Argentia started up to go to Argentia to work for the oil, but still back then he could maintain a part-time licence. My uncle moved from Petite Forte to Placentia and continued on to be a full-time fisherman.

The idea, when you think about it, is this province of ours was started because of the fishery. We're still here 500 years later because of the fishery. It's still over a billion-dollar industry. We think it should be more, could be more, and I think there's still a tremendous amount of opportunity for all of us in the fishing industry, but let's make sure that the principal

beneficiary is always the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I did my colleague proud and I'm delighted to be able to speak on his behalf on the fishery.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Now, I just want to get into a little discussion on the financial piece. As we know, a budget is all about choices. We've had lots of discussion around choices in this particular budget and what we believe are some of the options for government when it comes to helping the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We recognize there are those three questions that you often ask when you talk about monies. The three questions often get asked are: What do you want? What do you need? What can you afford? I might want to drive a great big SUV Cadillac. What I need is transportation to and from. What I can afford might be a very small car. So choices have to be made.

Right now in Newfoundland and Labrador, the people of Newfoundland, the want and the need are getting pretty close. There is a want for improved health care services. Certainly, we could all agree, there is a need for improved health care services. But part of the challenge in delivering that. We've all heard reasons why we can't do things, but I would suggest that we have to find ways to do those things. I will use the rationale behind the nurse practitioner as one example.

We have been told, the minister has told us, the Minister of Health on a number of occasions, he's working with the unions, he's working with their body to talk about the Nurse Practitioner Association to find a way to fund nurse practitioners so that the people of the province who are paying right now to see a nurse practitioner will no longer have to do so.

That's great, but while he's working on that particular issue, he can find a way to pay or reimburse the people who are actually using the services. Pay the patient. Reimburse the patient, whether it's done through a regional health authority or through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, whatever way you need to

do it, but, surely, having seniors having to go to a nurse practitioner and take \$35 out of their wallet to pay for their visit is not good enough.

We do not need to wait to figure out a way for government to reimburse nurse practitioners. The government can step up right now and allow that to happen through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, if you modify it, or through the regional health authorities. There has to be a way. I am sure that with all of the talented people that are working in government, whether it's in the Department of Health and Community Services, whether it's in the regional health authorities, whether it's in the Department of Finance, can find a way to make that happen. But let's stop now having seniors and others in our province having to spend money to see a primary care provider. Fundamentally, there's something wrong with that and we can do something about it. We need to do something about it.

So I would suggest that is something that does not need to wait. It can be done; it should be done. So let's start with that premise, right there, finding a way to reimburse the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are paying out of pocket to see a nurse practitioner. Reimburse them; find a way to make it happen. I think it can be done and should be done.

Similarly, when we look at the budget, it is a moment in time; it is a projection of what we will do for the rest of the fiscal year. And, as we know, sometimes budgets go up and sometimes they go down. The government has had the good fortune since the budget was first passed – or sorry, it's not passed yet because, hopefully, we're going to amend it before it get's passed or the government is going to amend it – but we've had the good fortune that oil has traded above what has been projected. Now this may or may not continue, but it has been trading above the \$85 mark.

Now, I'm not sure what the particular production schedule has been like for the last six weeks but, again, there would appear to be extra income flowing into the coffers of the government at this present time.

The same way, when you look at the tax revenue. We continue to charge HST. So every

time the price of gas goes up, the government benefits from an increase in HST revenue. So all of those jumps that we've seen in gas prices at the pumps are resulted in increased revenue to the provincial government and perhaps we're going to see more this week, who knows. The same thing with fuel oil; fuel that people put in their tanks to heat their homes. Every time that price has gone up, the government has benefited from increased revenue from HST.

So we know government, in the current situation, is getting additional revenue over and above what they budgeted. Unless, of course, they budgeted oil to be this high or they budgeted gasoline prices at over \$2 a litre. I don't think they did. I don't think anybody – I don't think they would have budgeted that. So, again, I think there is extra revenue flowing into the government at this moment because of all those things. So that is one source.

Then we turn around and we look at the budget and we talk about how the budget is allocated. There are areas in the budget that, during the Estimates review, we were able to talk about some of those challenges. The extra \$67 million that's currently budgeted in Salaries for government departments. I know that some of that will be for certain things, or increases, or step progressions, but how much of it is for new positions or the filling of positions that you have not filled in three years? Because, technically, two years ago, there was a surplus of \$50 million in that same area. Last year, the surplus was like \$63 million or \$64 million and the year before that.

So there are a significant number of vacancies that exist right now in the public service, whether they've been vacant for more than six months or vacant for more than a year, that is a question we have asked in the Estimates. That is a question we await the answer for. Hopefully, we'll get the answer soon enough to be able to actually look at how long those positions have been vacant.

I would suggest that based on historical documents over the last three years, the budgets over the last three years, there's no way that this government will fill or spend that \$67 million in Salaries this year. They will not be able to fill all

those positions. So why continue to budget for an expense item that you never achieve?

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That has nothing to do with cutting jobs because, at the end of the day, these jobs are vacant; these are not about cutting jobs, as the minister across the way is saying. It has nothing to do with cutting jobs. It has to do with how you budget.

So, realistically, budgeting for positions that you're able to fill in a year, instead of a plug number that you put in there and never achieve. That's a big difference. That's a big difference from one year to the next, that's all we're saying. From one year to the next, if you realistically budget for those positions you're going to fill, then so be it. But you have not been able to prove that for the last three years. So, again, that money is available.

There's \$22 million in a contingency fund, and government needs a contingency fund. There's another \$40-something million in another fund. So, again, when you talk about some of the biggest need in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador right now is to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador through this current financial crisis that each and every one of them are going through when it comes to the people who have to travel or use their vehicles for travel, who have jobs that require them to drive to and from work.

All of the people in the Minister of Tourism's district who travel in every single day from CBN to come to work and back, how much extra is it costing them every single week for transportation? For people who have to travel for medical appointments because the service isn't available in their region, how much extra is it costing them?

So these are the real issues that people need help with. The fuel tanks: we've heard my colleagues today talk, significantly, about challenges with home heat and the cost, whether it is the landlord, whether it is the tenant. Everybody is struggling to come up with a way to be able to afford to pay for those costs. What I'm suggesting here is that – even the Premier today

alluded to additional measures may be coming. It was quoted in VOXM: the Premier alludes to additional measure may be coming.

So what we are trying to say is don't continue to wait. Do it now. Help the people in Newfoundland and Labrador now that need that help. It's as simple as that. Find a way to do it. Even if it is only a temporary solution for the next three months, you find a way to drop some of the taxes on a litre of gas, then do it. Find a way.

Again, I have got to think there is enough talented people working in government right now that can find creative solutions. They will find us solutions; just give them the go-ahead to find them. Give them the go-ahead to find them. That's all we are asking for. Give them the opportunity.

For people who are heating their homes, they have incurred a significant cost. I know we have talked about rebate programs in the past and we haven't had any luck, so if you don't want to call it a home heat rebate program, but would prefer to call it something else, then find a way to give people a significant reimbursement for their heating cost.

I had a constituent write me yesterday – the Minister of Environment might be interested in this one. He wanted to apply for a heat pump. A heat pump requires a secondary source of heat under the program to convert. He has an oil furnace right now. For him to convert his oil furnace, which he still hasn't paid off because he had to put in a new oil furnace two years ago and he is paying \$100 a month, he wanted to take advantage of this home heat rebate program to try and save some money on heating expense, but guess what? He doesn't qualify because in order to qualify, he would have to remove his oil furnace. So it wasn't about reducing the amount of oil he needed, it was about he'd have to change out his oil furnace and turn it into electricity, at a cost of \$15,000 which he does not have.

So if you want to reduce people's dependency on oil, then maybe you have to be realistic and

say maybe we can help reduce the dependency on oil by allowing them to implement other measures in their homes, like heat pumps. Instead of simply saying you have to replace your oil furnace, the fact that you're able to put in a heat pump, and reduce the amount of oil you need to burn, that to me seems like, that's what we're trying to achieve. We can do that without spending \$15,000 on putting in or rewiring your house.

Again, there are programs that you've put forward, but we have to figure out how it works and how we can make it work so it benefits the most people. Because, ultimately, if that was the goal, we can achieve that goal by allowing more people access to that funding, the home heating rebate program, but not at the expense of having to eliminate their oil furnace and try to replace it with a new electrical system, when their house isn't wired for that kind of a system. So there needs to be changes made to it. We need to find a way.

But, again, that's what this budget is all about. It's all about choice; it's all about change in the air, we know that. It's all about hope because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are hoping that their government is listening. They understand the programs that government already implemented. Full credit on what they have done, but they themselves admitted publicly that it didn't go far enough.

The Premier has said there's more to come, or there may be additional measures. So what we're suggesting is let's not pass this budget without making those adjustments. Let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know that you're listening; that they have some hope; that there will be action taken sooner than later on the high cost of living and what needs to happen.

For that I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I appreciate having the opportunity just to follow up on my earlier remarks, because while I am not in favour of the Bay du Nord Project, I am in favour of this province getting the best deal possible from Equinor.

Last week, I posed a question and I wanted to take this time to elaborate under this sector of Government Services, general government sector, to talk a little bit about it and the exchange I had with the Finance Minister, which I appreciate.

If anyone's watching, I'm going to draw heavily on this –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

I'm going to draw heavily on what is happening in the United States right now, and I'm certainly not talking about the regressive move against women, pro-choice and so on, I'm going to talk about what's called windfall profit tax legislation. I would refer anybody in this Legislature to have a solid look at it.

First, I'm actually going to go to the Opposition here today. I'm going to talk to the Progressive Conservatives and my colleagues around me, because do you know what, folks? Fourteen of 28 questions that you asked today were preoccupied with the rising price of gas, cost of living, home heating oil and so on. We are inundated with this in each of our offices. I get it. I keep track every day, by the way, of every question, what every person asks and on what theme.

We're tracking these last few days, as our prices escalate, about 50 per cent of our questions are preoccupied with this and we're arguing over whether or not government should do something with some of the provincial taxes. Well, let me tell you about who's making the money. That's these multinational oil and gas companies that are going around the world looking for as much subsidy from us as possible. This is what the Americans are doing, Britain is also looking at

it, and I'm urging our government to do it as well. Whether we do it as a subnational, as Newfoundland and Labrador, as a country, there's something here worth looking at.

I'm just going to give you a couple quotes. "Last year, four fossil fuel multinational giants – ExxonMobil, Shell, Chevron, and BP – earned more than \$75 billion in a single year in profits. Crude oil prices are now 50 percent higher than the average daily price ...." I checked out ours, too. Suncor, operating here in Canada, made \$4 billion. Canadian Natural Resources, \$7.7 billion. We're not going after the right groups. We're here arguing amongst ourselves with these crumbs, while the oil and gas companies, and particularly their shareholders, their executives, that is who is benefiting.

So I would heavily refer everyone –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) men and women working in the (inaudible).

**P. TRIMPER:** This is where the Member never listens. What I'm talking about is going after who's making a profit. I am so a supporter of the folks of this province in getting as much opportunity – what I'm talking about is here we try to make this more affordable and try to make sure that our folks are gainfully employed, why do so many people have to suffer, especially in the lower end, the most vulnerable. That money and what the Americans are doing is bringing this in now; it just got introduced into Congress and it's taking 50 per cent of a calculated profit. This is a tax on profit, not on production, that's where the Member gets it wrong. It is on profit.

There was an average price of \$66 per barrel from 2015 to 2019. Both the Americans and Canada have been working with these calculations. So what we do is we take \$66, we compare it to right now – when I did these calculations, updated for my question last week, it was actually a little over \$100. So at \$66 and you take \$100.30 last Monday, that was our current average, that's a difference of \$34.50. Now this is profit that is coming on top of incredibly lucrative runs these oil and gas companies have had.

The way the tax works, it is applied solely to the profit, so as the profits go up and down, the

jurisdiction that has this legislation in place takes 50 per cent of it.

If we had it in place last week – this is what I talked about, for Hibernia, say – it would represent \$17.15 per barrel. So say last Monday or Tuesday when I asked the question, at 120,000 barrels a day up to 135,000 barrels a day – this is the kind of range we're having with Hibernia – that would generate for us some \$2.1 million to \$2.3 million per day.

What happens with the money is it is directed, it doesn't go to receiver general for Newfoundland and Labrador. This goes back into low and middle income – the folks most vulnerable, the folks most suffering from the high cost of living, from the high price of gas. That is \$2.1 million to \$2.3 million US. Those are big dollars, per day back into helping those folks. We could be doing that right now.

Now, granted, the projects are up and running and I can imagine the resistance that is going to go on with these oil and gas companies. But as the Minister of IET and his colleagues and the Minister of Finance and the Premier and government are sitting down and working with Equinor right now, I'm saying we should be striking the best deal possible for our province, and it protects the workers, it protects our industry. I'm not in favour of it, but I can tell you, let's get the best deal that we can.

I'm going to give you another example. Here it is for Equinor, by the way. If Bay du Nord operates for some 30 years and producing, again, as I did in my previous speech, some 300-million barrels of oil over that 30 years. It's actually a lower production daily rate than we're seeing with Hibernia, but, nevertheless, it represents some 27,400 barrels of oil per day. We apply that same \$17.15 per barrel. That represents about \$172 million a year that can go back to supporting the low income.

Government is talking a lot, as they should, we are all in support of it, the \$142 million; it's part of the budget that they're directed to low and middle income. I'm saying there's \$172 million out there on the low end of this project right now.



Again, the Americans are bringing this in, it's in Congress, just go online, have a look, you can see the bill is tracking through. The Democrats are bringing it in. I think it's going to be tough for the Republicans to argue with it, unless, of course, many of them are these shareholders and executives. The people who are paying are those, the consumers, everybody that we're hearing from.

I just want to read a few quotes. It says: Congress should impose a windfall attacks on oil company profits. There are many more effective approaches that could ensure that if such a tax is borne by shareholders, the lion's share of whom are wealthy individuals and foreign investors, rather than consumers, taxing windfall profits would align the oil companies' interests with the public's need for lower prices. This recommends an approach for setting windfall profits tax that will rise and fall with the fluctuation of crude oil prices, until they return to what we are feeling this pre-crisis level. This approach temporarily raises the tax rates paid by oil companies on their profits during the period that oil prices are at these elevated prices.

My independent colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands was just reminding me: Folks, let's just remember one year ago when we were dealing with the budget, I remember getting on my feet and talking about – and we'll all remember the escalating price of lumber. Remember that, it was driving the cost of homes through the roof. It was almost making it impossible, and the difficulties.

The problem there again was in those who were doing the production. Their base cost, the raw material, that's stumpage fee that we pay to the folks who are actually growing the trees, who cut the trees, who deliver the trees and the wood products to the processor, none of that changed. Those folks all got the same price. It was the folks who were actually doing the processing, who were sawing up the lumber, creating the materials and so on, they managed to, because of COVID, because of the circumstances and so on, enjoy tremendous profits.

This government was not nimble enough. Alberta did it. I stood on this floor last year on my feet and urged government to take a look at the opportunity.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting a bit loud again.

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

To be nimble enough to realize there's an opportunity here, and, by the way, the opportunity is an opportunity to help. It's an opportunity to help the residents of this province who are complaining.

Again, 50 per cent of our questions, folks, each day on this side of the House are preoccupied with helping those people.

So take a look at it: windfall profit tax legislation. I do believe there is merit in it. The Americans are doing it. Ignore what they are doing about women's rights, but there are some other good suggestions down there. Let's have a look at it.

Thank you very much. Speaker.

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

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

It's a pleasure to get up this evening and talk about concurrence on the Government Services Committee. I guess it's always a pleasure to get up in this House and speak. Every time we speak, we always, I like to say, speak for the residents who elected us, our constituents. I'm the shadow critic for Transportation and Infrastructure in the Government Services Committee, but also the Legislature is there, too, and as a member of the Management Commission, we are also a part of that group as well.

I guess one thing when my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port was talking about his background, his first job and where he came from a fishing community, a fishing family. Unlike most, probably even a lot in this House,

not everyone, but a lot, CBS is actually an agricultural community.

So a lot of the districts are based on the fishery and it's a very important part of our culture. It's who we are. I mean, I have fishermen in CBS as well, but it is in the Town of CBS's flag, it is actually agriculture. It's one of the symbols in our flag. It's a very important part of our town. I deal a lot with farmers. I heard my colleague from Exploits in the last few days on the cost of fertilizer and talking about the issues that affect farmers. It's not the popular thing, like the oil and gas or the fishery that we hear a lot about. You don't hear a lot about it and when he was speaking about it then he asked questions. I read on the media over the weekend. I'm not part of that. That has never been in my purview, so to speak, in the House. I always try to speak on it.

But it is good to hear that because sometimes that is lost in the shuffle. I know, Speaker, in your area there is a bit of agriculture, if I'm not mistaken, or close to that area and other Members around this House. But for the most part, we talk about the fishery. The fishery affects most every district in the province, but, ironically, you know – and some districts have got some tourism. That is kind of an outlier now, too, right? Because the fishery, like my colleague from Bonavista, he has both. He got the tourism plus he has got the fishery. It is a fishing community.

So it was kind of something that was triggered when the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port was talking about it. Sometimes we don't – in our own districts, I get up and say what a beautiful district I represent and I am proud of it and it is my hometown, I've lived here all my life. I probably don't speak about it enough in this House. Probably many times you are out in the public that it is very important to know and celebrate your background and your heritage.

Speaker, I guess, when I look at Transportation and Infrastructure, we had Estimates Thursday night past. It was a great job by all officials, the minister and his staff. We had a lot of debate, it was 3½ hours I believe we were here and it was a lot of good conversation. I appreciated the time

they did give to our questions and I commend them for that.

Some of the comments I've got to make are not going to be new to the minister. But I'm a believer. If you believe in something, if you stand for something, then stand. I've always said it may not be the best popular position, but you should stand for something. So don't hide behind, or don't try to water it down.

I guess one of the issues that I spoke out a lot about, and I'll spend a bit of my time here tonight, is P3s. The Opposition – when this party was in government back before 2015, we were the ones who worked on bringing in P3s. No shyness, no problem here admitting that. It was the way of the future. There was a lot of work being done just at the time government changed in 2015 on introducing P3s was a new way of doing things. It was the most economical, it made the most sense for governments to do that going forward, because so many liabilities on the books over the years for the government and responsibilities. We pushed it. And I was behind the scenes, I wasn't an elected Member, I was close in the Executive and to the elected Members of the day, I spent a lot of time in this Legislature as a staff person. We were all over it.

Current government were somewhat critical of aspects of the plan, but fair enough, when they took over, they realized that was the way to go. People don't realize a lot of this work is done, it's in the books, it's on the paper and when governments change this stuff is still sitting on the desks, in the bureaucrats. Whether the government accepts it or don't accept it, that's up to them. We had our poverty reduction plan; they didn't think that was a good idea. We had a home oil rebate; they didn't think that was a good idea.

But we also had P3s, a lot of work was done, the government opposite decided to take it and run with it. Fair enough. But when you look at the P3s, do it right.

I go back to one of my projects I spoke about a lot, the long-term care centres in Gander and Grand Falls. Seniors need them, the hospitals are full and the waiting rooms are full. They're out in the hallways. They're at home. They're being charged fees in hospital to wait to get in these

homes, as part of a process that government's charges so much a day to look after them in the hospital until the long-term care facilities are ready.

They're still waiting. We had a ribbon-cutting ceremony in March and everyone in the province thought – me included – it was a good thing, we were getting ready to open. We find out a month later, no, that's not the case; it's going to be set back a few weeks. Now I'm thinking it might be longer than a few weeks, hopefully not, but it's going to be a few weeks, maybe another month. Now that's two months back from the ribbon cutting.

But I guess the crux of what I'm trying to explain, or get out, is that should never be. That's not a result of a P3. That's the result of poor management, poor project management. Whoever's responsibility that is, well so be it. Everyone has to take responsibility for what they do in life. If you work serving coffee – my daughter does while she's in university – if she makes a mistake, it's her fault. If she's told how to do something and she goes and does it wrong, ultimately she has to be responsible for it. Some might say you're only working at Tim Hortons, but no, that's your responsibility, you have to do it right. Do what you have to do.

So we have project managers out on these jobs; someone is not doing their job. But ultimately it falls into the executive of the department, because they're the ultimate ones who make those decisions. They need to oversee the people that overseeing.

If you build a house, you put the studs in the house, you gyprock, you vapor barrier, you insulate, you put your gyprock on, you paint and you do whatever. So when you get all that done and you're ready to move the furniture in, do you stop and say let's go and check the studs? I should hope not. I hope you don't be the project manager in anything I'm living in, or building. Obviously, that's common sense that prevails there.

So just think about this, Speaker, you're in there and there was the ribbon cutting, and it was nice ribbon cutting, too. Nice pictures, everyone had their new shiny outfits on, everyone looked –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Photo op.

**B. PETTEN:** It was a great photo op. It was, I have to say.

They do a good job on photo ops. I like to remind people of that. People think I do it as tongue in cheek and I'm probably smirking when I say it, but photo ops are pretty popular opposite. They do a good job of it and I give them credit, more power to them. We don't probably do enough of it, but they do a great job. They do enough for both of us, how's that. So we don't need to do any photo ops because they're doing them all for us.

I'd say there are photo ops going on this evening. If I'm not mistaken, there are photo ops everywhere happening this evening, I'll leave it at that.

Yes, showers, the floors are not level. So the showers are in there and your floor is not level. Under that is concrete. What's the first thing you pour when you build anything? Concrete. It has to be, that's the basic of the building. So when was that inspected? When they turned the shower on? So do I trust the structure of this building? No

**AN HON. MEMBER:** There's no water.

**B. PETTEN:** There's no water, too. That's another problem.

This stuff should not be happening. To the minister's credit, he's not happy with it either. He said that and I respect that. But this is probably a little bit bigger than even the minister. This is why it bears repeating, it's why I'm on this topic, I'm not so certain we're doing any of the rest of them any better.

We're in the middle of the new mental health facility next door. I talked to someone actually that's working on that, after I spoke about the long-term care situation in Grand Falls; he reached out to me. They're wondering where they could find the 4,000 deficiencies that were in the long-term cares out there. I said: If you don't mind me asking, why would you be asking me that? I do not want to be embarrassed and the same thing happen over here that happened out there. And I said: Good on you. Because these

people are in the position, they can try to correct it before it goes wrong.

So you'll get criticized over here for what we're doing and what comments we're making, but, obviously, it's resonating. Obviously, by being outspoken in the P3 process and what's happening in the long-term care centres in Gander and Grand Falls, maybe we may get it done half right over next door to the mental health facility. Maybe it worked; maybe mission accomplished. But that doesn't make me want to stop and say, okay, my job is done. My work is done here; I'm not going to speak about it no more. No, because we got the HMP coming up. We still have Corner Brook hospital.

I guess it comes to a point of doing it right. I find this sometimes annoys me, too, it's insulting, I think, to the general public sometimes because the public know better. Most people in the province this day and age are not easily fooled. They pick up on these things and they ask the same questions.

Prime example was the lady that was working over there. I don't know this person, but they're keen enough to realize, hang on a second, I don't want to be anywhere near something like this happening here. So maybe that is going to make the process better. Maybe that will save the minister the headache that he had out in Grand Falls, but it still doesn't fix the problem that has happened out there; we're still living with that. I guess when you ask the questions, you're given this dismissive approach; you're only being annoying. I don't buy that.

We have a job to do in this House. Right now, we're the Official Opposition; we're the Loyal Opposition of this House. You know, if we have an election and the numbers changed, we could be there and they could be over in that role. Some Members over there were over in this role. It is a role of the House and they'd be doing the same thing day in and day out that we do over here. But does that stop us from asking questions; does that stop us from making points in this House or trying to be intimidated into not having our say? No.

You know, you hear in Question Period a lot of days in here they don't like the tone of the questions. They don't like the way we're asking

questions. They think we should do better. They're offended by it.

But that's not what this Legislature is, Mr. Speaker. It's meant to be respectful, absolutely. But respect goes both ways, Speaker. It's got to be on both sides; it's got to be respect show on both sides.

In our role as being shadow critic ministers, whatever role you want to call it, we have to challenge government. Our role is to oppose and challenge government when we see fit. At the end of the day, you do that to create better legislation, better policy and better spending of public money.

If you're spending over \$9 billion in public funds –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** They want to keep going all night.

But if you're challenging government in how you're spending in excess of \$9 billion – think about that \$9 billion. The average household is operating on probably less than \$100,000. You're dealing with \$9 billion of public money. We don't own that money. You're tasked with the responsibility for spending that in the most appropriate way. But it should be to the betterment of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. That's what that money's for. It's not to make me or anyone in this House happy. It's not to fund any pet projects. It's not their money anymore than it's our money. But it's our responsibility. It's the public's money. It's what we're built on.

We're here debating a budget now; that's what we're here for. We're sitting this night sittings and we're doing this concurrence. There are a lot of people who don't understand this concurrence part of our budgetary process. It's a long process. You try to explain that to some people and they don't get it. I don't blame them, because it can get pretty convoluted and dry, but it's a part of the process. It's what we're here for. It's our role. It's our elected duty to do that.

In certain circumstances, we've got different – I mean, the Member, my colleague for Stephenville - Port au Port, he is our Finance shadow critic minister. He's challenged every day. He's up on his feet. But you know what his number one issue and our number one issue here is? Cost of living.

Now, you know the media are not going to report it every day because they've got their other agenda and I can't control what they do. I could criticize them all day long. But I'm not even going to do that. But we have a responsibility, whether they want to report it or not, whether the general public wants to say how come you're not out on the cost of living? Where's your leader to, I'd be beating down doors. I say but we are. We send out news release after news release after news release. We can't help if the media don't pick it up. We're on the issue.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Maybe so. My colleague the Government House Leader just said the Liberal media. Maybe so. I wasn't even going to go that route.

Here I go again; I'm running out of time, Mr. Speaker. But I could go down a road on that one, too, and I'm not even going to do that. I'm going to try to be pleasant about this, but I could go out on that one.

We can't control what anyone reports, what anyone says, what anyone does. We can only control what we do. In this Legislature, there are a lot of strong opinions. There is a lot of good debate. There are a lot of great facts put to this floor. It's enshrined in *Hansard*. It's in our cameras. It's in the archived footage. People can watch this all day long. We are doing the best we can to deal with this very serious issue.

Do I think government listens to what we're asking? No. Do I think government knows the situation we're in? They absolutely do. Do I think government knows how to deal with this? Probably not. They're elected though. We can't tell government what to do; we can put out suggestions. When they come up with options we can debate it, question it and try to improve it.

Ultimately, you're the elected government; you have the most seats. The way our Legislature works, you form government. The Premier and his team decides to bring an agenda forth. We have a role to debate it and it's what we're doing here in this budget process. But to hear some of the stuff that I hear day in and day out in this House.

I spent a lot of time in here in my role as House Leader, I kind of have to be around here more than most, it's the running of the House and you're involved in integrate details of the House. It's very frustrating though at times when I hear some of the comebacks.

I'd be remiss if I didn't bring this up again. Today, during QP, the Premier – I have respect for the Premier. I mean I have conversations with him and I know he's growing in the role, I give him credit for that, but what's going on now, he's starting to get infected. He's starting to get infected now. Now, every second response out of him, he's giving rationale. He's reasoning for any failures that may be opposite, the rationale for that is, you know – and I have a tally here, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to ballpark it. I'm around 30 to 40 references to Muskrat Falls. But it's more than that. That don't count times I've been out of the House for a minute here or there or maybe I missed some with the heckling, but I'm going to say 40 references to Muskrat Falls.

So today he said, listen closely. Muskrat Falls is the reason for whatever the question was. You can ask any question, any question out there: Muskrat Falls, it's the rationale. So, of course, when I stood to my feet – I've said this in the House many times too – to speak, I said well, fair enough. Well, listen closely, Mr. Premier: Upper Churchill. That's how lame it is.

So do we stand here every day and talk about the worst deal signed ever, we're still paying for it, 40-odd years later – and how long am I gone – 50-odd years later. We have to go to 2041 before we can even go on bended knee up in Quebec somewhere to try and get our money back. But do I blame these crowd of people opposite that were Liberals? No. A Liberal government done it, they're not the fault. Some of them weren't born for God's sake. I mean, come on.

So you go on this side of the House, right here tonight now, we have nobody, nobody, right here in this Legislature at this moment on this side of the House that was around for Muskrat Falls. There's no one in this House right now, right this minute – I'm sorry, I was going to say his name – the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was there, sorry, and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. Sorry, I'll rephrase that.

But you're blaming the Opposition on the Opposition side; we weren't around for it. This is a serious point, outside the jabs back and forth, this is the point everyone needs to realize. There was no elected official right now, right this minute in the Official Opposition that were agreed or around for Muskrat Falls. Just like, why would I blame them for the Upper Churchill? It's the same equivalent as blaming us for Muskrat Falls. It's so lame.

I read an article a couple of weeks ago and this media person, this reporter, really put it in context. Called them out, call out the Liberal government: This is your excuse book. It's become a joke. Instead of changing up and trying to rebrand yourself and look better in the public, what do you do? You double down and you continue and continue and continue. But you know what that is, Mr. Speaker. That's a government out of ideas. They've got nothing to back themselves up on, they've got nothing to fall back on, it's blame it on Muskrat Falls.

In my final seconds, because I'm getting going, but I'm going to stop, every event, no matter how big or small, it's usually a small one, and it's a bit of good news, it's a big hoopla. Now, there are people everywhere tonight, I'm telling you, the flashcubes are going tonight. You can see it tomorrow morning, you'll watch it on the news, there's about 150 Ukrainians in there and I tell you, the Members opposite will be front and centre in those photos.

It's all about the good news. Don't deal with the cost of living. Don't deal with the obvious. Go get the good news picture and everyone will be happy tomorrow morning, except the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**B. PETTEN:** The Members opposite will, but no one else will.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to have another opportunity to speak to the budget. I kind of want to pick up on a lot of what my colleague for Conception Bay South had to say. I must say that I know my colleague does tend to get a bit of a rise out of the government Members, but he does hit a lot of points that I think are important. I don't agree with everything he says, but I agree with most things he says, I'll say that, most of the time.

**B. PETTEN:** (Inaudible.)

**P. LANE:** I do agree with you most the time.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to go to the general theme of what he was saying at one point, at least. That was about the role of Members here in this House of Assembly. When we're bringing up issues on this side of the House and, in this case, we're talking about the budget and, of course, specifically under these departments, I'll focus on Finance. But when we're bringing up these issues, all we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is communicating what we are hearing from constituents. That's our role in this House of Assembly. That's every Member's role, actually, to bring up the concerns that they're hearing from their constituents.

A common theme that I've heard from constituents in my district – I've said this before and I know all Members over here are hearing it, because they're raising these issues. I'm sure Members on the opposite side are hearing it, but they're either unwilling or, in some cases, not allowed to say it. But the bottom line is that I understand, I truly do. I understand the fiscal circumstance we're in as a province. I get it. I think we all get it.

We've been having year over year deficits and we have a provincial debt that continues to grow

year after year after year. So we all get that, we're in a tough spot. I think the general public gets it. I'm sure most people do. But the problem we're having at this point in time is that these are extraordinary times. If these were normal times – and arguably when the times were good, governments of the day should have been putting more money aside. Governments of the day should have been paying down debt. Governments of the day should have been, many people would argue, more fiscally responsible with all the revenues that were coming in.

Now we had a lot of needs, no doubt we had a lot of needs. But one could still argue that we spent a lot of money, probably more than we could afford. When my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port talks about needs, wants and so on and what we could afford, arguably, that balance wasn't always in sync when the times were good. We were taking care of the needs, we were talking care of the wants, but we weren't necessarily considering what we could afford in the longer term based on our debts, our year-over-year deficits.

I can remember at one point, when the price of oil was \$100-and-some-odd a barrel, times were good and we were still borrowing. We were still borrowing billions of dollars. We still had deficits. I can remember standing in this House of Assembly at one particular point in time talking about the minister's billion-dollar shopping spree I referred it to. Because here we had all this money coming in and we were spending all of it and we were still borrowing more money on top of that.

So I understand, and I understand times are tough now, as well. But the bottom line is these are extraordinary times in the sense of the cost of living for the average person. These things are out of our control, I get it. We all get that. We can't control the price of oil; we can't control the price of groceries; we can't control the price of home heating fuel; we can't control what is happening in Ukraine. Arguably, we could do more with the taxation side; arguably, we could do more. Now, how far do you go, as a government? That's the judgment call. How far have we gone?

Now, the minister will keep talking about the \$14.1 million or the \$14.2 million, whatever it

is, in the five-point plan. I appreciate that; I really do. And there is no doubt that it does help some people. It does help some people. But there are an awful lot of other people who it doesn't help; that's the part you keep leaving out. We talk about helping the seniors, but, again, the seniors that are getting that money are seniors that are in receipt of the supplement. The seniors in receipt of the supplement are the seniors who, all in, receive a basic OAS and CPP. That is it.

So if I'm a senior and I had a few RRSPs or I had a job, say, in the public service or private industry and I got a little bit of a pension – it could be the most minute of a pension, it could be a couple hundred dollars a month – I don't qualify and therefore I don't qualify for this break either. So I got nothing out of it.

If I'm someone who's on income support, yes, I got a one-time cheque; I got a little increase to my supplement. But if I'm somebody who is working, a working person, someone working minimum wage or a little better than over minimum – I have a number of people who told me they work two jobs just to try to survive. Guess what? They got nothing. They don't get a break. Zero, zilch. That's the issue.

So when we keep bringing this up – I just want to be clear – it's not that I don't understand our fiscal circumstance.

(Disturbance.)

**P. LANE:** Somebody from St. Mary's; I guess they're upset about the fish plant, too, Minister.

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

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

**P. LANE:** And I'm sure the Member got it all under control.

But when we keep bringing forward issues –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's your mother-in-law.

**P. LANE:** No, it's not my mother-in-law.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He got her blocked.

**P. LANE:** That's right I got her blocked.

But when we keep hearing issues from people about the cost of living, about the cost of fuel and so on, we have an obligation to bring it forward. It doesn't mean that we're not understanding of our fiscal circumstance. It doesn't mean that at all. But it just means that these are the things that people are concerned with, because I think, again, people understand the provincial debt, but they're trying to survive. They're trying to survive.

As my colleague said, there are people who used to give to the food bank – and I've had this said, too. I've had people tell me the exact same thing, actually. I've had a couple of people tell me: I used to give to the food bank, now I'm going to have to go and be a recipient from the food bank. That's not an exaggeration.

Some Members might think that this is all theatre and all that. It's not. I mean, I'm dead serious. It is not an exaggeration. That is actually happening. You can go into Mount Pearl, go talk to St. Vincent de Paul at Mary Queen of the World Parish, go talk to St. Peter's Parish, go talk to the major at the Salvation Army over on Ashford Drive. They will tell you that food bank usage is up significantly. They're seeing new faces. People they never saw before, they are seeing. That is a reality.

I had a lady contact me yesterday and she was so upset because her oil company just changed their policy. You used to have to get a minimum fill-up of \$300 to get oil. They just upped it to \$600. She said I can't afford \$600 worth of oil. I can't afford it. That was one of the companies. I not going to give the name of companies.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's more than one.

**P. LANE:** Well, it maybe more than one. But I know I contacted my former employer, I'll put it that way, from years gone by and I asked him about it, because I had the connection there. He said no, we're keeping ours at \$300 but I know that other oil companies are upping theirs. The minimum fill-up is \$600. She said: Paul, I can't afford it. If I have to put oil in my tank, that means I can't eat. Is there anything to help me? I had to say there's not. Unfortunately, there are no programs.

It was very sad that I had to say to this lady, well, you know, if you want, I can contact St. Vincent de Paul for you to try to get some groceries. Now, can you imagine, a woman who had never, never had to go to a food bank in her life and I'm having to say to her I can contact St. Vincent de Paul for you to try to get you a few groceries. There is no programs, there's nothing to help you.

Now, thankfully, when I made the call to the other company, they told me ours is at \$300. This company she's with and a couple of others, they're up. We're keeping ours at \$300, so she immediately called – I guess this morning she switched over to that other company.

But how sad it is that somebody had to do that. They can't afford to heat their home. They said if I did that, I would have zero money – zero money for groceries for me and my child.

We hear about seniors who are talking: I'm going to take my medication every second day, every third day, or I'm going to cut this pill in half. I have the pill, supposed to have the full pill, I'm getting a knife and cutting it in half and taking half a pill. That's happening. I've heard Members talk about it and I've heard it. We're not making this up. It is a fact.

And I'm not saying that people over there don't understand. I'm not saying everyone there is bad and heartless and all that, I'm not saying that. I know you're not. But I'm just telling you the realities of the calls that my office is getting and I'm sure all Members are getting these types of calls. It's very sad.

So while I do understand the need of us trying to be fiscally responsible, of being cognizant of that provincial debt, those year-over-year deficits that's growing that debt. I understand all that. Given the fact that we are in extraordinary times – again, extraordinary times – is this the time to say no we can't help? Is this the time to say it?

Maybe our deficit has to be a little larger this year than you anticipated. That's not a good thing to have to say we want to do that, but, realistically, maybe this year we have to say, do you know what? We had projected a billion dollar debt, then we got down to \$700 million,



\$500 million, now we're down to \$285 million, or whatever – I can't remember the number, \$200-something million, or \$300 million. But guess what? Maybe it's going to have to go to \$400 million or \$500 million like we thought it would be during the mid-year maybe. Because we've got to help these people right now and then we're going to have to work twice as hard next year. Hopefully, things will be back to normal.

Maybe we have to look at things like my colleague from Port au Port said about vacant positions that keep getting budgeted year over year but still not filled year over year. So we've kind of got this false number, so to speak, gives the impression that the money is budgeted for, but we know it's never going to be – maybe you need to go back to the department and say is this realistically going to be filled or is this just a placeholder for next year or two years time when eventually it'll get filled?

Let's look at the history of it; maybe we can come up with some money there. Maybe we have to look at some other spending priorities in different departments. Maybe there are things we're doing in different departments that we'd like to do, we want to do; maybe we need to do them. But do we need to do them now? That's the question. Do we need to do them now?

Maybe there are some things we've budgeted for that we can put off for another year or two because of the extraordinary circumstance. These are the types of things that people are asking and questioning. These are the types of things – because we have a fiscal reality as a province, but then we have the fiscal reality of the people living in this province.

I'm not saying do it across the board. There are people in this province, including Members of this House of Assembly, that as much as we hate having to go to the pumps – turns your stomach when you go to the pumps these days, turns mine, and you look at the gas pump and the numbers are just rolling up and up and up – but, at the end of the day, we're able to suck it up.

I wish you didn't have to do it. I wish you didn't have to pay it, but, at the end of the day, you have the fiscal ability, hoping in your mind that this is a short-term thing as well, that this isn't

going to be forever. But saying do you know what? We've just got to suck it up.

But there are people who can't suck it up. And the people who can't suck it up are not just the people who are in receipt of the seniors' supplement or the low-income supplement. There's a group just above them of either seniors who have a small pension or the low-income worker who are trying. They're trying.

I often felt that it's probably the most, in some ways, under-represented group. And those are the group that we really should be trying to help. Someone who is actually –

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

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

**P. LANE:** – getting up out of bed every single day, going to work, sometimes working two jobs and everything else, and other little hobble on the side, everything they can do to try to make ends meet. Not coming to the government with their hand out looking for anything; not coming looking for a cent. They don't avail of any programs, they don't come looking for any programs, but they get up every day and they work hard to try to make ends meet. And it seems like we can never do anything for them; they're always the ones that are left out – always the ones that are left out.

So one of the things, I think, we need to be looking at is maybe the threshold on some of the programs we have. You look at what the threshold is to get a drug card, as an example; maybe the thresholds need to change. Maybe the thresholds of some of the programs for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – the thresholds have to be raised a little to be more reflective of the reality. Maybe that's a way we can help people out a bit as well.

I know there are no easy answers. But if you're making these decisions, which is all about decisions, it is all about choices; we just need to be honest with people of what it is we're doing, why it is we're doing it. If the honest answer is we recognize that this group of low-income workers and seniors exist; here is how much it is going to cost to help them, but we value getting the budget to a 2025 balanced budget, that's

more important, that's a priority to helping this group of people. If that is what you're doing – if that's what it is.

Maybe you need to say, do you know what? It's going to be balanced budget in 2026 or 2027, unfortunately, because of extraordinary times – because it's extraordinary times. I know the argument can be made that if we keep doing that, every year will be extraordinary times. I get that, too. Someone can say, well, if we take that approach, then every year someone can make an argument that it is an extraordinary time. But I think if we were all – put it this way, I, personally, think I could justify to any person who asked or challenged me on that, I feel comfortable that I could justify that these are extraordinary times.

I don't think anyone would have any – it would be hard for them to justify, given the fact that the price of gas now is over \$2 and it's supposed to go up another – I think I saw on social media, eight or nine cents or something again tonight, going up again. Now people are starting to talk about is \$3 a possibility. Whoever would have thought that would happen.

When you're looking at the price of someone who had an oil tank and they were paying \$700 or \$800 a month; now they're paying \$2,000 a month – 2½ times what they were paying before. I think it's far to say that is extraordinary times. I can defend that it's extraordinary times. I would suggest any Member of this House should be able to defend the fact that these are extraordinary times. Therefore, if we have to raise that deficit a little bit more this year than we had hoped, to help people survive, if we have to make adjustments to the budget, if we have to put off some stuff that we know really needs to be done, but we can put it off for another year, or two, then that's what we need to do. We need to find ways to give people relief. The people who really, really need it; we need to find ways to give them some relief.

In general, I think that's what all Members, in one way or another, have been calling for. In one way or another everybody on this side have been calling for that. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because that's what we're hearing from the people who elected us. Those are the real struggles that people are facing.

Again, I say, people who never went to a food bank, who gave to a food bank, now having to be a recipient at a food bank. Seniors having to take their medication every second day or to take a pill and cut it in half. People who can't afford to heat their homes. People who are having to choose between heat and food. These are realities, Mr. Speaker. These are the realities that I'm hearing. These are the realities that all Members, I'm sure, are hearing. I think we have a responsibility to the people who elected us to do something about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to get up and speak in this House of Assembly and thank the constituents from the Ferryland District.

First, I'll start off by thanking the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL and her Committee last week or the other night in their Estimates. They did a great job. A lot of information there to be shared for sure. I'm getting to you, Minister, as well. The Minister of TI same thing, I sat in Friday evening and they did a great job in answering questions. It's a pleasure certainly to sit down and listen to it.

I was just speaking to a Member here and I said you get up and speak for 20 minutes, when you first came here it seemed like it was going to be an eternity and now you run out of time. You have a lot of issues to bring up and sometimes I'm not really sure how I'm going to go when I get up here, because I'm not here to fight with people on the other side. I'm here representing my constituents. This is what they're bringing to me, the same as the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands had said and the Member for Conception Bay South.

I'm not interested in the fight over there, I'm interested in listening, is what we need to do here. And that's what we're not doing, in my mind. I've said that many times here and I continue to say it, it's just something that we

have to get better at, in my mind. We have to get better at listening. It's not me telling you this, it's my constituents telling me and I'm telling you. So that's where it's to. And it's very annoying when we don't seem to ever solve any of the problems.

In here now, you talk for 20 minutes again and we'll never solve anything. We don't seem to take any solutions that maybe there or offer some suggestions; we just don't do it.

I just listened to the Member, he said there's a limit now of \$600 for fuel. That's the minimum that they can get. Well, I don't know if anybody thought about it, that's the same amount of fuel. It's going to cost him \$300 more to get the same amount of fuel. It's costing him \$600 now instead of \$300. And that's exactly what's happening. They're not getting any more in that tank; they just got to pay more.

So what is it that we don't understand about that? Somehow find a tax break for these people on fuel. That's all we're asking. Somebody come up with something over there, we're after throwing out solutions and, again, that's something where we've got to go.

I'll speak to the Member for Lake Melville. Well, I'm going to tell you, there was a walrus in Bay Bulls in 1966 and there was no global warming then, so I'm telling you that it happens. That stuff happens. I had pictures and our neighbour brought me down to show me when I was about 15, showed me the clipping out of the newspaper, there was a walrus in Bay Bulls up on the wharf in 1966. That's a clipping out of the news.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You weren't born then.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I wasn't born, but I seen the picture, I seen the clip. I was born then, sorry, I was a baby then.

You know, it's something that happened, and that stuff is going to happen. We look at the seals, all right? And the Member spoke on that again, I can't get into the details he got into because it's so much information, it was incredible.

But we have a Minister of Fisheries, we have a seal fishery that I told you before, we would stand behind you 1,000 per cent if you tried to do something with the seals here in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a big issue.

Just as well to be the minister of trout as to be the Minister of Fisheries.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** It's unbelievable. We have not done one thing about it.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** We've done nothing. We've done nothing about it, Speaker.

We have a billion-dollar industry in crab, the federal Fisheries sets the quota, the fishermen bring in the quota; we collect the tax. So you tell me what the Minister of Fisheries does in Newfoundland for that. That's my point. We have to try to get some control of our fishery. We don't have it. We don't have it for the quotas. It's unbelievable where it's to.

You didn't give it away, I can assure you of that, but, hopefully, you try to fix it. That's your job. That is the job of the Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Forestry, whatever you are. That's the job to try to fix. We'll stand behind you 100 per cent in the seal industry to do something with the seals. I guarantee you we'll stand behind you over here.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I'm going to mention it again, we talk about electric vehicles, and the minister is over there looking at me now, and we talk about electricity and trying to get mini-splits or heat pumps in the Houses, all right? We're going to give them a \$5,000 credit. Well, it's going to cost you \$20,000 to change it over.

They're coming to you for a grant for \$5,000; they can't afford the other \$15,000. So there's got to be some program that can help these people switch over. Yes, I've got a mini-split in my house and I've got oil as my main source of heat.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** But you're allowed.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah, I'm allowed. But that mini-split cost me only \$1,500 at the time. But these ones that we're doing now, we're giving a credit, they're trying to get heat pumps in, they've got to get ductwork in, they've got to change their electrical boxes, their fuse panels probably can't handle it or their electrical box can't handle it, so it's a big expense.

I had a gentleman call me last week – I'm not making this up, this is fact – this is a constituent asking me: B'y what is that all about? I said let me get you the news release on it so you can look at it. So he looked at it, I drove by his house probably a week later on an ATV with my helmet on. When I stopped and went into his shed and spoke to him, he said: B'y, I had a look at it, but I can't afford to spend \$15,000 to be able to do that. He said: It's a great idea, but it don't fit.

I can't say that gentleman certainly couldn't afford it, he probably could, but it's \$15,000 for him to change over and get the electrical done. It's not made up. It's a fact and that's what the people are telling us. We're passing it on to you.

I'm not standing over here – I've got no interest in fighting with anybody about it, but my job here is to represent the people and my job is to get up and speak on it. If I don't do that, then guess what? I probably won't be in the next time, if you don't get up and represent the people that you're elected to do that for. That is our job.

Sometimes I look over there and you need a Don Cherry collar on to keep your necks up with the heads bobbing up and down every time you ask a question!

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** It's unbelievable. Every time you ask a question, oh head rolls back. It nearly drives you crazy. Unbelievable. It's just unbelievable how it goes.

I live in a district where there's a daycare centre there and a lifestyle centre there. I'm going to say a 48-spot daycare and it's full. Well, they lined up when the building was being built, two

years before it was built, they lined up at the arena to be able to get their spot in the daycare. That's how busy and how much people are moving into the area and they're moving down from further up in the Ferryland District up in Trepassey, Calvert and all these areas, coming down to live closer to St. John's in Bay Bulls and Witless Bay and surrounding areas.

My daughter said to me that they did a survey at the daycare this year, I'm going to say probably a couple of weeks ago that she told me. There are 133 people looking for spots in the daycare and there are 48 spots there.

How long do you stay in there? How the daycares work, I mean, obviously they're taking care of a good group of kids here. When you go in there, if your first kid gets in there, if you have a second kid before they graduate or move out of the daycare, then your kid is going to get the first right to get in there. So not somebody that's on the list behind you. If you have a second kid within that five years, then you're going to get in there to do it. That's how big there is a demand for daycare in the area.

They're having trouble. These parents are having trouble getting child care. It's a very serious problem. Now they have to decide if they're going to go to work? Are they going to stay home? It's a big problem and I don't know how we solve it.

Now what's happening in some of the daycares, because you have \$10-a-day daycare, there are people that are coming home from school, going to an after-school program, and if you own this business, you probably would make the same move yourself, but there are no rules to stop them from doing that. I'm not saying it should be stopped, but after they've come home from an after-school program, well this daycare now, or some of these daycares, are taking advantage of the \$10 daycare. They're not taking the after-school program anymore; they're going to take the full-time kids that can come there all day, I'm going to say for the subsidies that they get.

So these people have emailed me and some of the residents, they emailed me to speak out: What happens to us? What happens to us, if they're seven year olds and eight year olds and they can't go to after-school program? Their

mom works and their nan is taking care of them, or trying to take care of them until that happens. So now they can't get off work early and now they're stuck with no place to go after school. So it's a big issue. I don't know if any other Members have it, but I've certainly got it. It's something that certainly should be looked at.

Sometimes it gets so discouraging when you're trying to make good improvements in the daycare to take this many people, but when that happens again, it's sort of like we go backwards a little step. I'm sure that you couldn't anticipate that happening, but the daycares are making their own decisions based on their business and that's the way that will work.

We did talk about, the other night in Estimates, we didn't really get into the discussion on it, but I'll go back to the ATV legislation that we had on Side By Sides. I was only in one yesterday. I guess it had a roll bar on it and it was enclosed, but it don't have the ones by your head here. I took my grandson with me, we had our helmets on in it, but it's not very safe to be driving – in certain vehicles – with a helmet because of your vision, you can't see.

I don't want to beat that to death, but it's something that we had agreed to in here, we've had everybody speak on it. We had letters from seven or eight different people on this side for sure that gave the evidence and they're getting them from – that's only seven or eight, I'm sure there are more than that. They probably received seven or eight each, but seven or eight people have spoken to it. Now, I'm not against not wearing a helmet, I got to tell you. But sometimes you have to look at it, does it make any sense.

Again, I had one of my best buddies say to me his daughter didn't really agree with that. I sort of explained to him how it worked and what kind of machines and he wasn't aware of that. But they do see people that are in these hospitals or in the Miller Centre and places like that, they're in there because they didn't have their helmets on, on a regular ATV or other ATVs. It's something that, again, in giving out the details and spreading the good news: you should have these helmets on, on these Ski-Doos for sure, ATVs and I'm going to say certain Side By

Sides, but, you know, some of them are not needed because of the way they're built.

Again, I spoke today on the landlords tenancies act and asked some questions in the House of Assembly. It's certainly a big issue, for sure, with the price of fuel. Somebody who is renting an apartment or a house –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** – and they're renting with heat and light included. So if you had an apartment rented to somebody, you owned that house – I'm sure there are people here that got their own houses that they're renting and may have heat and light included; they may not. But if you got heat and light included, well I'm going to tell you that has changed the water on the beans for sure. It has certainly changed the water on the beans for those people in regards to renting. It is a big, big issue for these people to do that.

So something that maybe we can look at and change the legislation to help these people out, but, right now, it's not happening for sure.

These questions are asked for the right reasons. These are, again, emails that have been sent to us and we've been asked to ask those questions. So it's something that we should certainly take care of.

I did hear the Member for Conception Bay South saying he's fortunate enough to have agriculture in his area. Well, I got tourism in my district; I got the fishery in my district; I got oil and gas in my district; and I got agriculture in my district. So I'm affected by all of those.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No ambulances.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I'm getting to that. I got a couple of minutes left.

You know, those are all big areas in my district, I guarantee you. Again, I had my grandson yesterday and we were going up to the farm and looked at – I'm going to say he had to have 300 to 400 cows, I never asked him. I should have I suppose because he owned the Side By Side that

I was driving, I should have asked him after I went through. But to go in there to see the calves, to the next grade up or a couple years old and then to when they're milking and the automation and the technology that they have in that area.

I'm looking at just driving up there and you're talking about fuel prices. He never said it to me, because I know him fairly good, I'm sure he probably hears this, he might.

But I drove up there and there's an excavator, there's a dozer, there are three tractors, there are three hay trucks, and that's not counting all the other small machinery. As a matter of fact, he has a truckload of oil every week dropped to his property. I know that because my buddy used to sell oil and if he didn't get up there in seven days, he was going to run short of oil in his operation. He used to say to me: Can you pass it on? I can't have him not delivering oil every seven days, or I'm going to be shut down. I'm milking the cows and like – it's unbelievable the operation.

He goes in to clear land, so you're talking about clearing land. He got acres of land up there that he's clearing off or trying to clear off with excavators. They're taking fuel and they are taking oil. That takes a lot of work. He's going up there, tearing the ground up, flattening it out, tearing up the rock, and then he's got to go seed it. Again, in the Goulds area here as well, I'm going to say there are four or five farms there. You'll know in two weeks when you get the smell in St. John's; you'll be poisoned with it.

But that's it; they're out spreading the manure to grow the vegetables, grow their hay, and they're trying to take care of themselves, so they're not buying this stuff from the mainland. They're trying to grow their own hay and take care of it. So it's certainly a big issue. It's a big issue in the Goulds area for sure. It is such a big area. You drive by and you see that. If you're driving out of the city, you can see the fields where all the agriculture is, so it's certainly a big area there for sure.

I will touch on the cyberattack that we had. I think it was in November, the date I have written down; I think that's when it first happened. We haven't got a lot of information that's after

happening since then. I know it's sensitive information, but it would be nice to upgrade the public. I know you've done it on a couple of occasions, but it would certainly be nice to touch on it a little more, give a little update on where it's to, or if there's any fix coming or what's going on. It's something that happened, and God forbid that it happens again, but we've really got to be on top of that stuff.

The same thing happened last week. I know the minister had spoken on it and some of the capabilities that they've bought or looked at and they're not really fitting. So it's something again that we've got to be more careful when we're buying this data or buying this information to be able to enforce. So another big topic, I'm going to say.

I will touch on the ambulance issue in Trepassey. I touched on that a good many times. The ambulance left Trepassey last year; now they're down to one ambulance. They leave and go to town. They're in red alert once they leave; they could be out there seven or eight hours. But they moved to Cape Broyle. There are now three ambulances there, sometimes – well, there's one manned for sure, but there are two or three ambulances sitting there, getting calls from residents with an ambulance – when you look out your window, you can see it – and you got to wait for it to come from Holyrood. That's not acceptable. That's an hour away at a minimum; when you make the call, it's probably an hour and a half by the time the call is made.

It's not acceptable that that happens in this day and age. Now, they moved it based on the number of calls. That's what they're saying. The number of calls is not the issue in the area. Yes, the number of calls could be down. Geography is the problem. Over there in the government where they're responsible for everything, I can't remember when the ambulance owner dictated to the minister where the ambulance is going to go; it should be vice versa. And it should be sat down and talked about where the issue is.

The issue is geography. You're driving that country from Trepassey and either way you go, it's 1½ hour, two hours to go to St. John's once you get in the ambulance. You're driving in winter conditions; you're driving in fog and rain. So if you're driving in winter conditions and

let's say if you left here, I am going to say it is 1¾ hours to 2 hours to go to Trepassey. If you left in winter conditions, do you think you can do that in a storm in two hours? Not possible. Can you do it in the fog? It is probably just the same as a snowstorm when it is foggy up there, fog right to the ground.

I spoke to the previous ambulance owners who used to do it – she is now the mayor of the town – and she knows what it's like driving that country and where they're after staying over the years and where they had to bunk out on the way back, that they couldn't get back up. Now, there was always a second ambulance there, but she has had not to make it back there because of snowstorms.

It is a big issue in the district and there is no reason, I don't see – yes, you can base it on numbers and you can base it on the number of calls, but it should be based on geography. It is the furthest place away from a hospital on the Island portion of Newfoundland. It is the furthest place away. I can't include Labrador in that because you have to fly here, so on the Island portion, it is the furthest away from a hospital and it is not acceptable to me.

I speak about it and I remember getting the call, driving in the Trans-Canada in July, and that was the first news I heard. I never got a call, other than from the residents who were hearing in the area. So, to me, somewhere along the way the minister has to speak to the ambulance owner and get this ambulance reinstated back in Trepassey. It is something that should happen and I'll leave it at that. I just have to leave it there. If not, I'll go on.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I'll go overboard is right.

So I will use one quote. Somebody in my driveway the other day, stopped in, and he said they had a teacher in school – and I'm going to say it was about 25 or 30 years ago. I thought it was really funny. I said: B'y, you never think on it like that, and that was 30 years ago. He said: One of these days we're going to have a phone that you're going to be able to speak to somebody and look at them while you're speaking.

And that has happened more than five years ago – 30 years ago, you'd never think that. I mean, that's what a teacher is saying. Now, he had some insight that we didn't have somewhere along the way. But, I mean, we look at it now and technology, we don't where it is going to stop.

To touch on electric vehicles, again, and the charging stations – by the time we get enough cars here to use those charging stations, that's going to be outdated. Not going to be able to be used, somehow – guaranteed. They'll have to upgrade that, guaranteed. It's like phones. Every year, there's a new phone, new camera technology that goes with the phones, so all this stuff is advancing. By the time we get broadband and internet in our district, there's going to be something new that you'll have to go and change again. Hopefully be able to change it quickly, not have to go rewire everything and do everything again.

I see my time is running out; I'll certainly get another opportunity later on in some debate here to certainly speak about the district.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The next speaker is the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and have a few words on the government service sector and legislative branch. First of all, I want to bring up the Department of Digital Government and Service NL. I just want to say to the people, especially in Western Newfoundland, and I'm sure all around the province, we remember when you couldn't get into the Motor Registration unless you had an appointment. You had to wait outside, wait in a crowd; we've seen the pictures out in Harbour Grace and pictures in Corner Brook. Did you ever think that bringing up public information and public policy doesn't work?

The doors now are open. The doors now to Motor Registration are open. You can walk in. You don't have to see a 45, 50 people line up. You don't have to see that anymore. They'll go

inside and if people don't show up, you can go fill right in.

So when people in the Opposition think that the government is not listening, public pressure works. That's a prime example. After we'd seen the pictures in Corner Brook and seen the pictures out in Harbour Grace with 45, 50 people in the lineup, in pouring rain, seniors, it changed. So don't ever forget that bringing stuff up in this House and bringing stuff, information, and bringing issues up on behalf of your constituents don't work. That's a prime example of how public pressure does work, if it's the right decision to make for the minister. Too bad it took so long of a time, too bad some people had to suffer to go through it, but it did work. So don't ever give up on bringing things up in the House of Assembly on behalf of your constituents.

And I understand government – I understand it; I've been around long enough. They may not be able to stand up and say yeah, we're going to change that because it was the wrong decision. They're just going to quietly do it. If you listen to the people now that I'm speaking to on the West Coast, most of the people who had a booking may just walk in on a Wednesday morning and not call in and say cancel my booking.

So you find now the doors are open, people get through the system very, very quick. I was over there twice about a month ago and you know the lineup was zero. Walk on in. You got an appointment? No, okay, stand right there. Came back again, same thing. You got an appointment? Nope. Walk in. I didn't make an appointment just to check it out and sure enough the doors are open: boom.

So keep up the work, I say to all the Opposition Members here in this House, don't think you're not being heard. You are. It is just that they're not going to announce that you've been heard. So just remember that.

And that's the other thing about the helmets, same thing with the helmet issue. I don't think that is going to change right away now. I think the government is hell bent – and I know for a fact that there are government Members who are

receiving calls on this. I know the Premier, personally, is receiving calls on this. But now they said, nope, if we change it, then what's going to happen is they're going to say they forced us to change it.

What you need to do is keep the pressure on and show the reasons why it should change. Show the reasons why if there are four or six people in a factory-sealed Side By Side going across Newfoundland and Labrador, they have to stop every hour because of the heat and noise. They'll never enjoy – and the safety issue, the safety now with the helmet inside and you can't see sideways. I mean, I heard the minister say, well, there are new helmets out there; well, there maybe, I haven't seen them. There probably are, I'm not up on that.

But I can assure you the people that I speak on the Side By Sides, the people who are the experts out in Corner Brook, Western Newfoundland, say that the machines were built the last four or five years for safety. They're not the *Mad Max* machines flying around 80, 90, 100 kilometres an hour. They're definitely not the Mad Maxes. It's the factory-sealed ones. They can reach a speed, I don't know, 20, 30, 40 miles an hour, but people going out are the older people that are going out that wants to go out and see the country. They don't want to go climbing in through the bogs and go across all the rocks. They're the ones that want to take it and go on a trip across the province; go down to the Northern Peninsula; go out as far as Port aux Basques, that area along the trail. They're the ones that are going to be using that. So this is why it amazes me that it was done, but we can't give up.

I say to the minister, the other day when I brought up about Brad Gallant about the helmet regulations, I wrote the minister and asked him for a meeting with Brad Gallant. He would set up a meeting. It would be a cordial meeting; I know those people, I know that it would be a cordial meeting; it would be an information session. I haven't got a response.

I spoke to Brad Gallant two Saturday nights ago at the Humber Arm South firemen's ball. The minister says, well, he got my number. Well, Minister, there's an official request on your desk



asking for a meeting on the West Coast: Not a response.

I just got to put that on the record, because Brad asked me to bring it up. Now, people know Brad Gallant. Brad Gallant is well respected in the South Shore, all over Corner Brook, actually. He's the fire chief for Humber Arm South, the largest town, except for Corner Brook, of course, in the Humber - Bay of Islands. He's the fire chief, well respected, got his kids into the Side By Sides himself, brings them in for a lot of rides. So I'd say to the minister this was emailed to you March 3, 2022. Still haven't got a response for Brad Gallant to have a meeting.

And this is not a knock on the minister because I'm sure the whole government had to make the decision. The Cabinet had to make the decision on this. But if you feel strong enough – and I know I've got people who told me that they called the Premier looking for a meeting also on this – so if you feel so strong, your reasoning for it, why don't you meet with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

I say to the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, would you meet with a group?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Would you meet with a group? You did. The Minister of Energy, I've seen you meet with groups before that had different points of view. But you meet with them. You may go in, you may get some different issues, but you would meet. That's the key.

I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure went into a few meetings, that when you go into the meetings and people need the roads done, it's going to be a bit hostile. They're going to express their point of view. But I'll guarantee you one thing – I learned this from many years – they may not agree with you if you go in and meet with them, they may have a different point of view than what you've got, but I guarantee you they'll respect you for coming and talking to them on their home turf. They'll respect you. They'll respect that.

This is what I say to the Premier: people are asking for a meeting in your own district – in your own district. And they're also asking for a

meeting in his own district on the cataract surgery, too, by the way. I'm getting calls and I met with people from the Premier's own district on the cataract surgery.

So I say to the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, when you stand up saying, well, he's got my number, here's the letter he's waiting for a response, through me, for a meeting. I trust that will get a response and there will be a meeting before the May 27 deadline, before the regulations kick in. He asked me to bring it up. He's a well-respected man. He's speaking for a lot of people. This is not just one person; he's speaking for a lot of people, I can assure you that. He is speaking for a lot of people in the Humber Arm South area, which goes way back to the Lewis Hills; goes way back to Serpentine. They have all got cabins.

Just imagine now, a lot of them have got cabins in around a few ponds, probably – I run it, it's like five kilometres in. Now they have got to wear helmets to go in five kilometres. A little road they did up years ago on both sides, very flat, now they have all got to wear helmets.

I could read a couple of emails from a constituent who used to take his kids – two and three years old – put them in the back seat, put your child seat in the back seat and now they have to go to put helmets on them if they want to take them for a ride. Can you see a baby going in a little Side By Side, all of a sudden trying to sleep with the helmet on? That's what happens. And now they're saying they're taking the enjoyment from my family away because the kids have got to wear a helmet.

So who in this room is going to take their two, there, four year olds – he had two kids – two and three I think they are and four now – going to take them and go on over the bogs with them? You are going to take them in so you can go in and get the fresh air, walk in the woods. Now they can't do it. They have got to find helmets to go on the little kids with heat in it, the noise that you can't even speak to them and if they happen to fall asleep along the way.

These are the emails I'm getting on the Side By Sides. I will say again, I do have a Side By Side,

a factory-sealed Side By Side, I think the maximum it can go is 28 to 30 km – that's the maximum it can go and that's downhill. It's diesel, downhill. So, all of a sudden, now when we go up across about a minute and a half ride, we have got to wear a helmet to go up Allens Road. We have got to wear a helmet to go up Allens Road, cross over and you are on private land.

What a lot of people are going to do – you mark my words what is going to happen. You're going to see an increase in coyote licence and you're going to see an increase in rabbit wire. People are going to go in and say they're going to look first and see where we're going to put our snares at, and you're going to get an increase in coyote licence. They're going to challenge people then to say, okay, if you think I'm gone over 20 kilometres, take me to court without radar. How many enforcement officers do you think are going to be in the woods with radar? It's not going to happen – not going to happen

I tell you another thing a lot of people are going to do, by the way. Another thing a lot of people are going to do, and especially a lot of seniors and older people – ask me; I'm not that bad yet – they're going to go to a doctor and say that they need to stop on a regular basis to use the washroom. So if you make frequent stops, you got a doctor's note and say you got frequent stops. Okay, don't go over 20 kilometres, even though there's no radar. You see how many people are going to have doctor's notes saying they need to make frequent stops. You watch.

That's the three ways that this legislation – there are so many loopholes – and let someone take it to court. Somebody 70 years old, 72 years, driving along and say you haven't got to stop frequently. And that's right in the legislation: frequent stops. So, people, remember I said this, because if one of them seniors or even anybody younger, or even with a little kid, make frequent stops, I guarantee you once that person is charged, it's going to be in the court.

Now, we're going to have to define what are frequent stops. That's the next issue that's not defined here. It just says frequent stops. So I'll say to the minister, with all due respect, because

I know it wasn't totally you. I know Cabinet probably had to do it all, or it was just the minister, I don't know. But it's her department, and I know how Cabinet works. In order to have something in, the minister has to bring it forth. So the minister brought it forth.

Minister, sorry about this, but you're the minister for it. So I say to the minister, if you're the minister for it, if the Minister for Digital Government and Service NL is the minister for it, then you're the one the people are looking for the meeting. So I ask the minister once again, and I gave you a few suggestions, because I met with a lot of people on the West Coast on this, and they gave – here are the ways we're going to get around it. And you're going to see more court action on this.

Minister, I look forward to your response and a date set up in the next couple of weeks to have the meeting with Brad Gallant and we'll organize Lark Harbour, Humber Arm South, whatever's convenient for you – Corner Brook if necessary so you wouldn't have to go down on the South Shore. I look forward to that meeting.

I'll stop on that, Mr. Speaker, on that topic. The other topic I was going to bring up is finance for a few minutes. And I know it is easy on this government to say here's what we want, and we start putting out a wish list. I know that. I'm understanding of all that. But this is extraordinary times, I say to the minister. There's got to be a way that we can help out. There's got to be. I am confident that we've got to find some way to help out and us people in this House of Assembly, we're a bit fortunate. We are.

But the people who are just on the borderline right now are going to find it tough. They're going to find it tough. I can assure you as gas goes up, food goes up, rent goes up, electricity goes up, oil goes up, they're going to have a hard time. I know, from the bottom of my heart, no one over there wants to see anybody suffer. I really feel that; I really, truly feel that. This is not saying anybody over there has no heart or no compassion; I'm definitely not saying that. But what I am urging government to do – and I heard the Premier today say it was going to come in phases. There may be another phase. The Premier said that today – I think it was put

on VOCCM – that it may come in stages; it may come in phases.

I say to the minister, and I won't get into it too deep, look at ways that we can help now. Because I can tell you, and I know Members opposite hear it too: What is it we can do? I can assure you – and this is a suggestion to the minister and I seen it done on many occasions over the years. I say to the minister, go into a room with the Finance critic, the Leader of the Third Party, and come up with a way that we can help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so we all can stand in this House and pass it unanimously. We can do that because I trust that guy. I trust him and I trust you, Minister, that if three of you got in the room, you'd come up with a solution that we'll say we'll all agree upon. It may not be what everyone wants but try it.

We did it before. I can name off times where we sat down in the room and there was a stalemate and we went out in the backroom and we stayed there until we got it straightened out, when I was in the Opposition and in the government. But you got to have the confidence that it is going to be ideas coming from the critic, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and there is going to be good ideas from the Leader of the Third Party.

I know, Minister, I can tell you, if you never had the restraint on you about the deficit, and I understand that, you would come up with some good ideas also. And you got ideas. It is just how you go about it because of the financial restraint. I know that; this is not a knock on anybody. This is more of a plea for the people who are finding it rough.

But I can assure you, you get three of you together and I'm confident –and I'm speaking on behalf of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands. If three of you went into the room and came out here together and said, okay, we've got a way to help out, I'm sure the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands will join me in standing up and saying, okay, we're going to go with the majority, no questions asked. Because if it was three parties agreed to something like that, who are we to say, no, we're going to stand up and try to debate it? I've seen it done and, Minister, you were a part of it

when we did it before – you know that – when we sat into it.

I'm pleading with you, Minister, because there are a lot of people hurting. I know some people that were in Opposition when I was in Opposition back in 2011 and we worked with the government. I'll give you a good example, before I go. It was the pension from Bowater's – Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

Thank you.

**E. JOYCE:** The pension for the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. The person who I was dealing with was Jerome Kennedy. He asked me to deal with the unions on his behalf, because I got a good rapport with the boys; I know them all. And I trust that guy and he trusted me, and we worked together, giving the information. Every now and then I'd give him a question – here's what we're going to ask today. He said okay, thanks, (inaudible). We worked together and we worked out a deal for the pensions. We worked out a deal for the pensions for Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

I was in the Opposition and he was the minister. He took my confidence and I took his confidence, and I trust Jerome Kennedy, every word he said, and he never let me down. But guess what? When we went out, we kept the mill going, we got the pension work done, we got the deficit under control for the pension, and it's all because we sat down with the government at the time, the PC government at the time, and we worked out a deal.

I've got to give Jerome Kennedy credit for that, and I've got to give Tom Marshall credit for that also, to call me over – and Dwight Ball – calling us over and saying, listen, here's the problem. Can you help us out? And we did it.

So it has been done in this House. I was a part of it, on the Opposition, and part of it on government. So I'll just leave that, Minister,

with you, and just some food for thought, please. Because there's a lot of people hurting.

The last thing I'm going to speak on for a minute is Transportation and Works. I was speaking to someone the other day about the roads in Newfoundland and Labrador. I was speaking to a couple of guys on the highways. You know what they told me in Western Newfoundland, highways? Usually in the winter, you get one spring thaw. This year there was seven. There were seven spring thaws this year; usually is only one. There were seven this year. So the roads are tough all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because of the climate. They are.

I know, and I say it to the minister – he's over there listening to me attentively what I'm saying about Humber-Bay of Islands – we're all scrawelling, especially in rural parts, for money for roads. I know the bind you're in. But understand that this is our role to do this. This is no knock on the minister, because he can't control the environment, he can't control the climate, but we can't control what our constituents bring to us, which is our duty to bring to the minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Any further speakers to the Estimates of Government Services Committee?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that this House do concur with the Estimates of the Government Services Committee.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

On motion, Report of Government Services Estimates Committee, carried.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy House Leader, that we move to the Concurrence debate for the Social Services Committee.

**SPEAKER:** The motion is that this Committee now examine the Estimates of the Social Services Committee.

Do I have any speakers?

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

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just speak to this for just a couple of minutes as the Chair of the Social Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I sit here and I listen to all my colleagues and we're all kind of talking from the same songbook. We're all representing the people of this province; we're all talking for the people of this province, and there is good and there is bad.

There is no difference in my district. Just recently in my district, on March 31, one of my clinics shut down, the clinic in Mount Carmel-Mitchell's Brook. That was a clinic that a number of seniors accessed and there was access for healthy living and well-being, but the clinic closed down. Then I have the clinic in Whitbourne and it's the same situation; we're monitoring it for physicians and trying to get doctors in place.

However, the province stepped up to the plate and they put in place some new, collaborative care clinics. Those collaborative care clinics are probably the way of the future. There is no doubt that personal doctors are very important also. I have a son who spent 14 months without his own doctor and now he is a patient of the collaborative care clinic. I can tell you he has multiple medical issues and it seems to be working right now. As a parent, of course, my anxiety would be extremely high if it wasn't

working. But we have to adapt to the present and adapt to the future. That's a reality.

Mr. Speaker, education, also, in this province during this pandemic, we are all giving hats off to our educators – our children and our educators. I mean, this has been a difficult couple of years. The kids were home; you're trying to home school them. They're using Chromebooks; they're on Zoom; teachers are trying to teach from a distance and we're trying to continue to move along through a pandemic. So you have to give credit where credit is due. Our government did work really diligently to try to address those needs.

Roads: we have issues with roads; we all have issues with roads. Like, come on, call a spade a spade here. But there are good things happening. There are some tenders being announced now. There is some work getting done; it is slowly but surely.

We also have our weather, you can't ignore the reality of the freeze and the thaw and the ups and the downs and the two-foot potholes and the whole nine yards. But it is what it is and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is working collaboratively with each and every district throughout this province to try to address those needs, primarily, at first, on the roads that have the most traffic. That is understandable. We have our ambulances going over, our police – we have a lot of traffic, people going to and from work. So you need to address the high-traffic areas first. That's a reality, Mr. Speaker.

I was here in this House, actually, I was sitting up there when Gerry Rogers, she was sitting over here to my right, when they announced the All-Party Committee on Mental Health. I've been here 6½ years and there hasn't been a sitting that we have not discussed mental health. It is a huge issue and this pandemic truly and honestly put a huge strain on mental health services in this province. But I also sat on the Committee and I worked alongside and advocated with individuals who wanted the new mental health service, the new facility attached to the Health Sciences to decrease stigma. I've heard a lot of people kind of complain about that location, but that is a location where everybody and anybody can go to the same building to get mental health services and stigma be erased.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we're doing good things in this province when it comes to social services.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is another area. In most of our districts, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is a huge topic. Today, we also saw the new introduction and expansion with bus passes for seniors. I heard someone over there saying we weren't doing anything for seniors. I think we're doing a significant amount for seniors. Seniors are a huge portion of our province and I can assure you they have not been ignored by this government.

But that's it, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to address the Social Services.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

I'll speak briefly to this, too, but I do want to start and say the importance of social services as a whole and the importance of this Committee, and the importance of those departments. We are looking at, now, many health care issues announced throughout the province and one of the ones that face us is just access to health care.

In 2019, we had eight doctors in Labrador West. Now, in 2022, we have three active and one on maternity leave. So, you know, in a matter of a very short period of time, we lost the majority of the practicing physicians in our region. But we do have seven nurse practitioners in the region that would like to provide more access and would like that. Those changes need to be made to allow for them to contribute. I've heard from them, I've talked with them and they want to be able to contribute more in the access to primary health care. That's something that really needs to be considered.

I did bring it and discussed it in my submissions to the Health Accord to Sister Davis and Dr. Pat Parfrey. Because we need to reimagine and look at different ways to provide primary care in that. I've said it in this House before and I'll say it

again, when my wife moved to Labrador West, she thought it was strange that we had doctors. Because she grew up on the Coast of Labrador, where primarily you're seen by a nurse. So having access to a doctor was something different. But she preferred it, you know, she had a good relationship with the nurse practitioners in Cartwright and having the idea of being able to access that again would be a thing, even in an urban setting.

So there are different ways to deliver care. We would like to have seen – I would have liked to see more in this one to address those kinds of things right now. I know it may be a long process, but it's not a new idea. It's an idea from the past that potentially could help now.

And another thing, too, in the Social Services Committee that really has an effect on my district is housing. We've seen in the last little while the very significant increase in the price of housing when it came from rental or it came from the retail market.

We've seen a very big, significant increase that has priced housing out for almost every individual. Some properties now are not even worth, a few years ago, even a quarter of what people are selling them for today. By pricing people out of housing, it is a very serious concern that really needs, as a whole, to be addressed.

I saw an article on it yesterday, talking about how in comparison from the rate of housing costs and starts in the United States compared to Canada, compared to the cost of income and the increase of income over a certain period of time, the average Canadian income didn't keep pace with the average increase in the cost of housing. They are significantly out of sync.

That has actually translated over into our province, especially in places like Labrador West where the mining economy and the significant lack of housing availability has contributed significantly and it has created a lot of pressure on people of the region, especially those who rent.

We do have the threshold going into Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is higher than on the Island, obviously, but, at the same

time, people who make significantly more than even that threshold cannot find housing at this time. It's creating a lot of other issues, especially for those who want to come to the region and provide services, most notably trying to recruit and retain health care professionals and teachers who want to come to Labrador West and work but can't because there is just no available housing for them to start their careers, so it is actually having a trickle-down problem to people.

Right now, we have a significant amount of lack of doctors, nurses, teachers and all that. And because we don't have housing for these professionals, it is now impacting the residents of Labrador West. So everything has a cause and effect, especially when it comes to some of the stuff like health care, education, housing, access to those things.

We are seeing an actual direct correlation between the lack of housing and now the lack of services we are getting in one aspect of it. This is where we find the problem. We need a more holistic approach in a sense of looking at how do we provide housing to a place like Labrador West. It does take the Member responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but it also takes the minister responsible for Transportation and Infrastructure, especially the municipal infrastructure side of things, to find ways that we could encourage housing development in Labrador West. Right now, either it is too expensive to start or there is just no incentive to do it. It is causing a big, significant problem in our region.

I have spoke with both councils. They have land made available to a point, what they can do, but to develop it and move forward with some of these plots of land requires a bit of work that even a developer would find too expensive to even consider or make the houses priced out of even the range of anyone reasonably wanting to buy a house. It is almost between a rock and a hard place in that sense, but we need to take a look at how do we remove those barriers.

Another option, obviously, is to start working towards appropriate housing for seniors who

want to downsize and move into something that they can actually maintain and manage but, at the same time, also apply to everything on one level, the ability to have home care and everything like that come in and look at it. Because, right now, the situation a lot of them are in, it just doesn't suit their current needs and this is where you look at the total whole of everything.

So I would have liked to have seen, especially in this, more looking at those kinds of social services, per se. It is a need not only in Labrador West, but there are other rural communities and other communities that are starting to see similar things now. When you look at the housing, there is a housing need here in St. John's, there is a housing need in a lot of more urban communities across this province and then, obviously, Labrador West and Lake Melville and the North Coast.

So we do have a housing issue in this province right now, and it is a combination of affordable housing for those who just can't go and get a mortgage tomorrow, but also a lot of these houses are right now priced out of range as affordable for most residents of this province. We do need to take a look at housing and how do we provide it but also how do we get the cost down that is it actually manageable. Especially in today's thing where you have to choose do I pay my rent; do I pay for my heat; do I pay for my medication; do I pay for this. These bills and stuff on the population are accumulating.

Another thing, we talk about the cost of living and all that stuff and access to pharmacare is a way to bring down the cost of living. Downloading the cost of medications that you require to keep yourself healthy and on time. A lot of seniors are choosing to skip days on their medication or split it in half or those kind of things. So providing medications and the ability to access them to the population would also, in one effect, make the population stay on a more healthy course because they're getting their medication regimen, they're being provided for and they're keeping up with what their doctor asks of them.

At the same time, we also take the burden of that cost off the senior, off the individuals, so it would be one less thing for a person in this province to have to worry about. It would also do one thing to take the burden directly out of their pocket and put money back into the pockets of many people.

Like I said there, there are also a lot of other ways we can get money back into the pockets of people and help in this time. We look at the removing of HST from electrical bills. Electricity is a necessity in today's society and having a tax on it does create a bit of a burden, but it is a way to remove the burden directly off the people of the province and put money directly back in the pockets of ratepayers. That is just one thing you could do.

That's where we look at social services as a whole: How do we help the most mount of people we can possibly do with a single policy? Pharmacare, dental care, removing barriers with the MTAP, making sure that people have equal and fair access to health care. Removing those kinds of barriers and allowing people more free access to the services that they need and it removes a lot of worry and stress from the population. That is what a lot of the Health Accord – the first draft that is out now talks about: the social determinants of health.

When you think about it, you don't think about it, day to day, what is a social determinant of health. But when you actually realize everyday things you do, later on it affects your health. This is the thing, like the conscience of the province, that we all have to think about. How do we remove barriers from everyday social services or daily live that would actually improve the social determinants of health – access to clean drinking water, equal and fair access to health care, access to healthy foods, providing those kinds of things. That's the way to help a larger population bring down a lot of the costs but also we have to do it in a way that we remove the barriers so people can actually gain access to them. It is not only for the select few.

These are things that we all want to think about and talk about and we should always have in our consciousness and consider when making decisions. We look at right now access to mental

health. Another social determinant of health is having good access to mental health and the ability to receive it. But it is not just one-time trips or in some cases it is a whole approach where individuals who require long-term care, in the sense of mental health, access to a longer program and having that fair and equal access is also important. It helps a lot of people and, once again, if you go in and help now, it will save a lot down the road. Not even just in money-wise but it will save that person a lot of their own personal health down the road.

So we want to make a population that is healthy, to make healthy choices, but at the same time you don't want to put any barriers in the way for people to access or utilize these things. So looking at the cost of living; looking at the cost of food and healthy food; looking at the cost of access to medical services. It all, in the end, is one kind of package; it's all one kind of thing to look at. And that's when you look at changes, or anything like that, you've got to look at the whole picture of it. Because it all has an effect later down the road.

So when you look at my situation of Labrador West, where people are having a hard time accessing rental units or housing right now, it's having an effect down the road because now we can't have housing for medical professionals, teachers or other government service employees. We don't have housing for them to come up to Labrador West and provide service; it's now having an effect on the other end.

So, at the end of the day, it's all connected. We have to look at the continuous chain of how everything is connected when it comes to providing social services. That's the thing we need to look at right now. We have to do it in a way that, you know, a change now potentially means a reaction later down the chain. So the entire system of how you're going to do it, it operates in its own ecosystem. So that's why we have to have a look at that.

I'm glad that there are some changes coming. I'd like to see it come faster. I think there are some other little things that we can do along the way while we wait for the other larger changes. That's the thing we need to really look at is providing these services for those who actually need them. We look at it as a whole picture.

Obviously, one of my biggest gripes, and always will be my biggest gripe, is the current Medical Transportation Assistance Program. The backlog and the method of which to apply and how the 50 per cent prepaid works and all this is just a very convoluted system that is not actually helping, but more hindering, from everything I've seen so far.

I think it's one of those things that really needs to be readdressed. It needs to be looked at from a different perspective, from the perspective of those who use the program, or try to use the program in some cases, and how it actually sometimes can hinder access to timely health care. It's something that almost needs to be completely disassembled and rebuilt, in a way that does create fairness, does actually help when help is required and to be more understanding of unique situations for a lot of people trying to travel to access health care.

Out of all the things, it's one of those things that seems to be the most prevalent in my office, people trying to access this program. So when we put things in that way, like I said before, it works in the chain, it hinders someone from receiving timely health care. Sometimes people put off receiving health care because of it and then, eventually, an individual's health could be affected down the chain.

So this is something that, you know, is hindering, it's not helpful and it's doing, potentially sometimes, more harm than good than it was set out to do. It's something that I really was hoping would have been addressed in this budget, but clearly it wasn't addressed. I think that we really need to take it into consideration how some programs do affect the population, especially when it has a negative impact on others.

So with that, Speaker, I conclude.

Thank you.

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

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



It's an honour to stand here today in the House of Assembly to speak on this important Concurrence debate. I really, first of all, want to say thank you again to the people of the District of Harbour Main for putting their faith and trust in me to be their representative in the House of Assembly. Every day I feel grateful to have this opportunity, especially when I get the opportunity to speak and represent their interests.

The first thing I want to talk about before I get into actually discussing some of the Estimates that have taken place in my portfolio, I want to talk about democracy. I want to talk about the hallmark of democracy, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at the past three years as an elected Member of the House of Assembly, I think of a few principles that really, to me, represent what democracy and what this House of Assembly truly means. The first one, I guess, can be described as collaboration. We hear that word used often in the House of Assembly. And I just want to talk about that for a few moments before I get into my discussion about the Estimates.

The hallmark of democracy, I believe, is collaboration. I know that we have a political party system that perhaps conflicts with that concept of collaboration. But I think we need to really look at this again and refocus our attention on trying to be more collaborative in our efforts in the House of Assembly.

So, for me, what collaboration means, it means listening to each other. It requires both sides engaging, reflecting. It's important for us, as Members in the House of Assembly, to really – we get into this kind of dance, if you will, where we're just too quick to call something black or white. We're too quick to take sides, one against the other. I think we need to leave more room for reflection and more room for discussion and more room for really, truly, working together.

Now, that might sound like pie-in-the-sky concepts. I mean, maybe it is not the real world in the House of Assembly, but I think that we really have to look at this a different way. The reason I say that is because when I hear from my constituents, they say that we are not listening. And we're not. We can't even listen to one another when we're speaking in the House,

right. You can see that right now as I speak. That's the way this whole process has evolved.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting a bit too loud, please.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

So my point has been made; we really have lost the ability to listen to one another. I think that is probably part of the problem. We get so entrenched in our own views on one side and the other that we've lost that capacity to really engage and really kind of look at the problems and try to be part of the solutions.

People are hurting, Speaker. People are hurting in our province right now; there is no question about it. They can't really find a way because they believe that the government is not listening to them and that is a real problem that we have to face.

So, again, it is up to all of us, each one of us here in the House of Assembly to be part of the solution. The people of our province are counting on us to do that. It leaves me, really, when I think about this, to consider what my role is as a Member of the House of Assembly. What is my role here in terms of leadership?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the Members to take their conversations outside. It is really hard to hear the speaker.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

Like I said, I am left here to consider my role here as an elected Member in the House of Assembly and for the people that I represent. I

guess we try to instill those values of let's try to work together here, because that is really what the people want from us. They want to see a government that listens. They haven't seen that in this *Budget 2022*. They really haven't seen that, and we know why: Because they are not listening. They won't listen when we are in the House of Assembly, so why would they listen to the people that have elected them?

But, Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak about the Estimates and I am going to start primarily with my portfolio as the shadow minister for Justice and Public Safety. And there are a couple of things I will point out, first of all, and I will say that there were some positives that I could point to with respect to the initiatives by the Justice and Public Safety Department. First of all, almost \$17 million of funding went to the RCMP. So I think that is certainly a positive initiative and I think that is important to ensure that our society is protected and that we are safe.

Also the \$1 million funding to the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association, that also is very important. They perform a very significant role in terms of search and rescue. So that, of course, as well was a very welcome initiative to see.

When I also see the family violence intervention court, there was approximately \$392,000 that was funded for that court. I am going to talk a little bit about that court and its important role later. As well as the Drug Treatment Court – \$326,000 was allowed for the Drug Treatment Court.

So those are all very important initiatives and I think we have to acknowledge when positive things happen and when government does take and recognize needs as they did with those few initiatives. But I think we need to look at a very important piece of the Justice Department and Justice and Public Safety which revolves around Her Majesty's Penitentiary. First of all, the issue of the replacement of Her Majesty's Penitentiary – HMP – and the programming in HMP.

Mr. Speaker, I am sad to say that, really, that is not left in a very good state, in my opinion. In

Estimates, you know, I have brought this up as well as in the House of Assembly in my tenure here as critic for Justice. I've asked questions about HMP. When is it going to be actually constructed? When is this facility going to be in place? It's been years in the making. When I've spoken to correctional officers, for example, down at HMP, they don't even believe it's going to happen. They have such little faith and confidence that this penitentiary will actually be constructed. I don't know. It's been years we're waiting for this.

So in the meantime, while this facility is going to be constructed – I mean the ground hasn't even been broken yet – it is imperative that we have increased and new programs and services in this institution and in this correctional facility. I've asked again, repeatedly, just as recent as last week, with respect to the mental health supports that are desperately needed in Her Majesty's Penitentiary, and really there was no real answer of substance, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, there wasn't.

We worry about that, with respect to the mental health piece. I'd like to say that there are many concerns that have been raised about Her Majesty's Penitentiary. We heard the Jesso report and there were many recommendations that were made in that report, but I'm going to just highlight a few of the concerns that we still hear from prison reformers and advocates in our community. They are very concerned about the state of affairs at this penitentiary.

It is not equipped to handle prisoners with mental health issues and substance abuse issues – fact. It is just not equipped. So we know that people are going in there and they're not getting the treatment that they need. Mr. Speaker, we know that the prison – I stated this even last week. Prison is not only a place people go to; it is a place they come from. So it's a revolving door if we do not have the proper supports and rehabilitative programs in place, Mr. Speaker. Also, with this facility that's down there, the lack of physical space means it's difficult to even meet security and the health needs of inmates, and also puts at risk correctional officers as well.

Training for HMP correctional officers and mental health has not been a priority for this government; it is not a priority now. We need to ensure that our correctional officers have the enhanced mental health training that they need in order to respond to the mental health issues that many inmates have.

I have heard a statistic and this was some time ago but over 70 per cent – and it is probably even more than that – of our inmate population suffer from mental health and substance abuse challenges, yet the programs that are down there just do not cut it. They do not cut it. When I asked last week to see if there were any kind of enhancements to be made to these programs, there was no significant commitment by this government to do that, so that concerns me as well.

We have a great opportunity here, because we're going to be replacing that institution sometime – I'm not sure when. I don't know when it is going to happen. I hope, unlike many of the people that I speak to that don't really have faith that it is actually even going to happen, that in replacing the HMP, this is an opportunity to put in progressive and positive programming to modernize the programming that we can have. To enlighten, even – because, Mr. Speaker, we know that it is only in our best interests when we ensure that inmates are rehabilitated, that is the best protection that we can have as a society. It is the best protection because we know if they are rehabilitated, they're going to come out and they're going to be better citizens. They're going to be reformed if we have the proper treatments in our penitentiary.

But we have to be able to get to root causes; we have to be able to deal with the substance abuse problems and issues that are down there and that people suffer from. We have to implement innovative and corrective programming, and we don't see that down there. What we have is very inadequate and insufficient, but we need to make sure that we have these kinds of treatments and rehabilitative programs, life skills training, vocational training. Again, that will ensure, when they have served their sentence, that they come out into our community and they are rehabilitated, that they are reformed, that they want to be better citizens. As I said, prisons are not only a place people go to; they come from.

We need to have as well a comprehensive mental health strategy. Now, I know that the Minister of Health, when I asked this question last week, he said that they are making initiatives and they have things on paper. I'm hopeful that this will mean that there will be a very mental health comprehensive strategy in place. But we need to ensure that that's followed through on, and that's something we have to really follow carefully.

So again, with respect to the replacement of the HMP, it's been years, Mr. Speaker. It's a long, drawn-out process. It's taking forever. Correctional staff at HMP have told me directly that they are skeptical and even doubtful it will happen. When they have such little confidence, that is concerning. The majority of offenders, Mr. Speaker, in confinement will return to society. So we always have to remember that. They will come back in. So rehabilitation has to be the end goal here. It has to be the end game here. It has to be a major goal.

Otherwise, our people that are in there are not going to be returning as productive citizens. I don't want to see a revolving door. I don't think anyone here wants to see that in place. So we need to ensure that we have things in place to prevent that, so that they're not more likely to reoffend when they get out. That puts every one of us at risk in society.

So it's in the best interest not only of the inmates, it's in the best interest of the correctional officers; they spend so much time in that facility when they're working there. It also will protect each one of us as citizens. It will protect our own society.

Mr. Speaker, HMP is a key piece here; it's very important for us to be able to have the proper attention given to the programming, to the mental health needs that are down there.

One final point, I'll bring it back to what I started with in the beginning of the speech. It's about collaboration, Speaker. I got a great example, just as recent as today, about the lack of, really, attention and listening by our Minister of Justice and Public Safety, and that is in reference to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I raised this question in Question Period, how disappointing it was for this fantastic organization that is there for – it is a women’s serving organization. It not only involves the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality but it also involves the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and other ministers as well. But this is such an important organization in our criminal justice system and they are being ignored – they are being ignored, Mr. Speaker.

They provide housing. Yes, I know that they met with the Minister of Finance, too. I know that but I have heard from them how disappointed they are with the response from this government, yet such fundamental things that they do. They provide housing; they provide individual and group programming; they provide outreach services in Newfoundland and Labrador; they provide traditional housing that supports women upon release when they come out of the Clarenville Correctional Centre, and upon release from court.

They provide three meals per day for individuals at the Elizabeth Fry. These are staffed with social workers, life-skills coordinators, outreach workers, advocacy coordinators. They received 217 referrals for services from other community-based organizations including Thrive; including Stella’s Circle; including St. John’s Status of Women; Eastern Health and John Howard. Yet, they were basically, ignored by the government. In particular, with respect to funding, they haven’t received funding.

So we would just ask the government to at least recognize this important organization and the important, vital work that they do. Hopefully, they will reassess and see about providing the much-needed financial support that this organization needs to survive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Again, always a pleasure to get up and speak on behalf of the wonderful residents of Topsail - Paradise – always a pleasure to do so. Before I get started, I want to just put out a welcome to 166 Ukrainians that came into our province today.

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

**P. DINN:** Wonderful to get them on the ground. I hope they stay here. But that is our next step: We have got to work on the retention. But it’s always good to see them land here, and I suspect once they get a feel for our province they won’t want to go anywhere else. So thank you for all the work that’s been done there, to get them here and hopefully keep them here.

I also want to speak to our Estimates. I sat in on the Estimates for Health and Community Services. I applaud the minister and his staff. They answered all the questions we had; they were very good. In fact, the Minister of Tourism had said we’re very cordial in the meetings. And why wouldn’t we be? Unlike last week, I think the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville had said something about: Why aren’t you your jovial self when you’re asking questions?

Those are serious questions that I ask, because we’re asking on behalf of our constituents and on behalf of the residents of the province. That’s our job, as Opposition, to ask those questions and look for answers. This is specific for the Minister of Health and Community Services. This is specific to him, and I know he’s listening. He’s always listening, because he always has an answer.

Last Wednesday, I got home, after I did that bit of fear mongering in the House. I was late getting home because I coach a soccer team on the side. I volunteer my time there. I got home and the phone rings. This is my mother calling. Now, I hadn’t had a chance to look at the news, but she says: Paul, I saw you on the news tonight. I said: Oh, good. She said: You were mad; don’t be getting angry.

So I’ll tell the minister, I’ll try to tone it down. I think those were the words. You’ve got to listen to your mother.

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

**P. DINN:** No, I'm not sure about that, but she might. I'm not sure.

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

**P. DINN:** Now that actually sounds reasonable, but Mom's a smart woman.

Okay, moving on, we're talking about the social sector.

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

**P. DINN:** I'll stay; I'll keep it jovial. You mightn't like what I'm saying, but I'll keep it jovial.

**T. OSBORNE:** In the meantime, tell her that her favourite MHA said hello.

**P. DINN:** Yeah, she sees him all the time.

Anyway, we're talking about social sector, and the social sector takes up, well, almost two-thirds of the gross expenditure in the province. So it's a huge sector. Health and Community Services is almost 40 per cent, 38.8 per cent. Those are huge numbers. I'm giving the minister a free ride here. But, look, I respect the position he holds and the department he has to deal with.

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

**P. DINN:** Well, I won't go that far.

I say that because, as the shadow minister for Health and Community Services, the amount of calls I get is just outrageous.

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

**P. DINN:** No, there not all positive calls. In fact, I'm not sure if I got any positive calls, other than the Member for Topsail - Paradise, they say he's doing a wonderful job in the critic role. I hear that a lot.

When we look at what we just went through, we just had Volunteer Week. We just had Mental Health Week and this week is Nursing Week in Canada. Volunteer Week, the theme was: Volunteering Is Empathy In Action. We'd be

nowhere without our volunteers, really. You think we have a big budget now, the amount of value that volunteers bring to our community and our province is huge.

Mental Health Week, the theme was This is Empathy: Before you weigh in, tune in. So you see the trend, the empathy, putting yourself in other people's shoes, when you're volunteering, when you're dealing mental health issues, or dealing with individuals who have mental health issues and before you weigh in, tune in.

Of course, the nurses, we answer the call. They tune in and they answer the call. I cannot say enough about our front-line health care workers for what they're doing, what they've done and what they're expected to do. The work they put in on a daily basis in this province is just huge – huge. I thank them and I'm sure everyone in the House of Assembly here today thanks them.

But it goes back to the empathy part of listening to what people have to say and trying to understand that and come back with the best response, not necessarily one you're going to agree on. So when I go through the social sector, the social sector is about people; it is about people in this province. Many of the items in health care – a lot I've learned about in the last year and it's amazing what you learn. So I am going into this in an objective sense, I have no pre-established notions on what I'm hearing other than the people calling me are people with lived experiences.

Some of the things I've dealt with is IVF, having IVF services here in the province. We know it's clear that there was a commitment made to provide those services in the province. In the interim, there is a \$5,000 subsidy to help with that, up to three cycles, so it would be \$15,000 in total. Which, I know, from hearing from people with lived experiences, is not nearly enough and it is not what was promised.

The other night I was at a house and the little 5-month-old child there was the product of two loving parents, but also an IVF process. There are so many out there who could avail of this more easily and readily if it were available in the province. Because the \$5,000, yes, it's a help, but it's still not going to help a huge majority of those who have to come up with the thousands

and thousands of extra funds to conceive and have a baby.

We talk about some solutions, I've heard from so many with diabetes and so many talking about continuous glucose-monitoring devices. I've listened to diabetes Canada; I've gone on a number of Zoom meetings with different groups talking about that. I've got a stack of papers and reports at my constituency office. The benefit of having these monitors is unreal.

In fact, just today we were talking about a case, an individual, who couldn't travel to get her vitals done in terms of her sugar levels. B'y, if she only had a CGM, she won't even have to leave her house to do this. It frees up people to be more active in society.

As I said, when you talk about savings, if diabetes leads to 30 per cent strokes, 40 per cent heart attacks, 50 per cent of kidney failures that require dialysis, 70 per cent of non-traumatic foot and leg amputations and it's the leading cause of blindness, an investment in these devices, if they reduced them minimally is going to be huge savings.

I read another report here in the province that talked to reducing how these devices would reduce the ambulance calls and would cut in half their visits to the emergency room. Just imagine how many of those calls then could be utilized on others with more serious issues. How many of those visits to the emergency room, if it's cut in half, could be utilized by others. It's a savings. It makes us a healthier environment and population.

Mental health, there are lots – and I'm hoping tomorrow I'm going to find out a little bit more through a meeting on what's available in mental health. I think I have a good grasp, but if I listen to people with learned experiences, they're still looking for long-term continuity of care resources.

I was inundated with calls last week after the Wednesday Question Period around mental health and the 811 line. Individuals were calling me and telling me it's not true, you call into that line, they've been put on hold. I got some emails from people who suffer from mental health who said the last thing we want is to punch in

numbers on a keyboard. So I can only go by what these individuals are telling me.

Then we hear from the service provider in the news, who – well, I mean, what do you expect? They're going to praise it as much as they can. If someone is selling me a car, you're not telling me what's wrong with it; you're telling me what's good with it. So it's the same that way.

So not everyone is pleased when it comes to mental health. We really need to start looking at that more closely in terms of long-term continuity of care resources. Of course, the financial strain we know on people almost doubles mental health issues.

I talked about diabetes: we're the highest rate of many chronic illnesses in this province. Huge numbers and, as I said, many of those are the aftermath of poor sugar levels and a glucose monitoring device could very much help there.

You talk about the cost of living. We see the price – I'm not sure if the price of gas went up another 10 cents tonight, I stand to be corrected, I haven't been out, but there was another increase today. I don't know how people can do that, how people can afford to drive, let alone afford everything else that is affected by the cost of fuel.

The Medical Transportation Assistance Program that provides a kilometre rate to individuals who have to drive outside a certain distance to get to their health care. That hasn't changed. So they are getting less mileage, literally, for what they are getting.

Our seniors' homes – our seniors are our largest demographic. It's getting up to 30-odd-or-more per cent. We are the fastest aging population in Canada. Our seniors matter. We have to start listening to them in terms of what services they need and what health care they need, and they need to have choices. Not every senior wants to go into long-term care. Some want to stay in their own home. But it comes down to having the resources and, in many cases, the human resources to give them that choice.

We talked about the backlog of surgeries. That's part of the back and forth in the House with the minister. That's what we do. That's our job in here. I'll talk about how BC have basically eliminated their backlog. The minister was telling me how Regina has a huge backlog. At the end of the day, who cares about BC and Regina? We care about Newfoundland and Labrador. So let's use both of those and come up with a solution that helps deal with the backlog.

A gentleman called me the other day – he sent me an email. He had heart issues, serious heart issues, actually, and he needed to get diagnostic tests done. He needed to get a cardiogram done. He called in here to the Health Sciences. They sent him a letter. He got the letter in the mail. This was two weeks ago. He opened it up: January 2023 was his appointment for an echocardiogram. You do the math. Eight months time. You are there with a heart issue.

Do you know what he did? He called around to all of the health centres in the province and asked them: Can you do an echocardiogram? This is what he did. I believe it was Gander. He called on a Friday; Gander hospital said you send me the referral. He got the referral faxed out on that Friday; he was done the following Tuesday – done the following Tuesday. He went out, he spoke to the technician out there and he basically said how busy are you? And she said, well, 8 to 4 every day; you know, not bad. Nothing wrong with it; I think that is probably what it should be for most of our health care professionals, rather than getting 24-hour shifts.

So his point was why is there not a connection? If you go into a hospital here, if you go to the Health Sciences, and they tell you in nine months' time we'll get you the echocardiogram, why are they not saying, you can go here or you can go here or you can go here and get in there quicker? Why are they not saying that?

The point made out in Gander was why, if that equipment is not being used after four in the evening, why is there not a retired technician or someone called in who may want to do some during the evening? Look, there may be reasons for not doing it, but unless we start exploring these options – and this is not even looking

outside the box – and listening to the people, there may be solutions that are staring us right in the eye.

Imagine, he went from eight months waiting, to having it done in four days, an echocardiogram. The stress and anxiety that was relieved from that person made a huge impression on his health. He certainly wasn't stressed out. We know stress and that is not a good thing when you're dealing with heart issues or in this House of Assembly at times.

Look, we're in the middle of Nursing Week; we have so many front-line workers that put in outstanding efforts. I got calls today on one of the collaborative care clinics. I'm not disputing the concept at all. I think it will work in some areas; it is not going to work everywhere. But we are getting calls. I got a call today from an individual who was at the Mundy Pond one: went in, was registered and then never got in. Was told to come back the next day.

I was told by another person who called me – actually, it was a doctor, a young doctor called me on this, on the collaborative care clinics – and she indicated some days you're getting a bunch of patients that come in that need to see the doctor. They need to see the doctor. They don't need to see the nurse practitioner. They don't need to see the pharmacist or the RN, their situation, if triaged; they need to see the doctor.

So this young doctor's comment was how does that relieve the backlog? And most chances, though, that doctor may be a family doctor that left their own clinic. So what we bring in and what we put down may look perfect on paper, may look good on paper. But we've got to start listening to the individuals out there who are utilizing these services. The ones that are going there and utilizing these services on a regular basis.

Yes, you can talk to clinicians, that's part of it. Yes, you can talk to service providers, that's part of it. Yes, you can talk to the health consultant who provides the 811 line, that's part of it. Yes, you may sit around a table and have one or two people there with lived experience around the table. But at the end of the day, the number of calls you get from individuals who are dealing with lived experiences and are telling you

exactly what happened, exactly how they're treated, exactly what they need and offering solutions, then there's no reason – regardless of what side of the House we're on – we shouldn't be exploring those options.

My time is up and I'll have my seat.

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

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

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

It's good to be able to finally stand in this hon. House at this late hour and speak to the budget and, of course, Concurrence for the Social Services Committee. Before I get into that, I would like to acknowledge that yesterday was Mother's Day. I would like to wish Happy Mother's Day to the mothers here in this House.

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

**J. WALL:** Of course, to my own mother and to my wife and, of course, I speak on behalf of all 40 Members of this House when I wish Happy Mother's Day to all mothers and those who have taken on the role of mother, across our beautiful province. I want to say that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I had the opportunity to be in historic Gander this past week. I had the privilege of attending the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador symposium. This is a group of elected officials that are gathered from across our province under the direction of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. I had the privilege of listening to the hon. minister speak several times. It was different topics that she did speak on: regionalization, the Municipalities Act – and I know I'm getting accolades from the Minister of Tourism, and I appreciate that. She also spoke to the code of conduct and to mandatory training. All were relevant to municipalities across our province and those elected officials who were there.

But there was one thing that I heard her say, and I appreciated that she said it because it made a lot of sense. Those municipal officials that I spoke with as well appreciated that. She said that when legislation comes before her department,

that she's putting it through the common-sense lens. I thought about that, and that means a lot. Not only to us in this House, but to the elected officials on a municipal level that she is representing. I'm hearing that as well. I'm speaking to many people across the province. But that common-sense lens I did appreciate and I said I give credit where it's due, and I do appreciate that comment, Minister.

With respect to the budget – and, of course, while we were in Gander, we had many conversations with municipal elected officials. They're concerned for their municipalities, for the level of support that's coming from the department. I know that she has said it in Estimates and she said it again while we were at the symposium with respect to the municipal operating grant at \$22 million, but not limited to. And that's important because our municipalities are going to need that help going forward. It is important. So with respect to the minister's comment on not limited to, we will be remembering that, when needed.

We'll come to the budget. I was disappointed with respect to the budget, no line item there for regionalization. I know the minister has spoken to that several times, but it is concerning and it's concerning municipalities across the province when we look at no line item in the budget for the discussions on regionalization. We've had discussions with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. They came and spoke to our caucus; I'm sure as they spoke to yours. And it was concerning to them as well because when you're moving a plan forward, it all has an associated cost.

So that was one thing that I was concerned about, Mr. Speaker, with respect to not being in the budget, and of course the municipalities are aware of that as well. It was said earlier that this is now Municipal Awareness Week. So I would like to applaud all municipal leaders throughout our province for taking on that leadership role. I know the importance of it; we have colleagues in this House who know the importance of municipal leadership. And it's quite important. The quote I've said, it's the boots on the ground and the first line of defence for any government issue, whatever level of government – municipal, provincial or federal. So I do appreciate the work that the municipal leaders



do and I'll be recognizing Municipal Awareness Week in my district, as I'm sure all of you will as well.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** To the municipal leaders.

**J. WALL:** For the municipal leaders.

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

**J. WALL:** Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity, as I said, to speak with many elected officials while in Gander. We discussed the cost of living. Of course, it came up on a regular basis. One lady from Central did say to me, an elected official, that this budget isn't helping the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian with the cost of living as it continues to rise in our province.

We've spoke about that here. I know the parameters that the minister is working under with respect to the amount of support that she's able to give but when elected officials and municipal leaders are saying this, because they're hearing it at their level as well in their municipalities, that it didn't help the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian, it resonates with me as I went through the conversations.

The Premier has said here in the House that it didn't go far enough. My colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port said additional measures may be coming. So I look forward to that, because additional measures are going to be needed. Only a segment of the population was supported in this budget. I know it was an important segment. However, going back to that quote from the lady from Central, it doesn't help all average Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We will be seeing some taxes come through with this budget with respect to the carbon tax and, of course, the sugar tax that has been spoke about so many times here in the House. Again, they're saying that it's not the answer. Extra taxation is simply not the answer when it comes to the level of engagement that's required here.

Mr. Speaker, we look at the cost of fuel. Someone just mentioned that it's going to be rising again tonight. I wasn't aware of that, but I'm glad I got the heads-up. When you look at

home heating fuel and the cost of diesel, we've spoke about that here many times, but it bears the need to be repeated because the necessities that we all look at day to day are becoming more and more unattainable, especially for low income, middle income, our seniors. This is concerning. The level of concern that it puts on my shoulders is heavy, and everyone feels it. There's no one here that doesn't feel that from their district.

But we were told today, with respect to the level of taxation, I believe it's approximately 43 cents, what was spoke about earlier. This is something that government has the ability to move on in some way, shape or form with respect to a portion of that. We did put forward an amendment with respect to the budget. We look forward to some changes being made, if at all possible, when it comes to this budget coming down for all the province.

I heard earlier today a colleague spoke about the cost of diesel and with respect to the shipping costs to companies. I had a good conversation Saturday afternoon down at Mile One Centre - Mary Brown's Centre is called now, I'm sorry. There was a dance competition there and there were people from all over the province there for the dance competition, from all districts. There were 20 different dance companies from across the province. But the dance studio company who brought everything in from New Brunswick spoke about the cost of getting everything here.

That cost was put on to every dancer that was there at the competition and, of course, my daughter was one of them. That is where it is also felt when it comes to the extracurricular activities that families are putting their children into, and this just happened to be dance. I know it happens with all of the other activities as well, but that company had to come here from New Brunswick and they bore the extra cost of coming here and that cost was put on to the young men and women who are dancing here in that competition and, of course, we all feel it. It is all passed down to the consumer and we do feel it.

So the cost of living, no doubt, is getting more and more - it is harder and harder every day when are looking at the average person trying to

survive with respect to choosing between heat, food and medication. I have said it here before and it bears repeating with respect to seniors splitting medications and rationing insulin. It is difficult. No doubt, it is difficult, but we see this on a regular basis and we are hearing it from our constituents, as I am sure the government Members are hearing from theirs as well.

One of my colleagues spoke about food sustainably earlier. I don't have the same accounts as my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port. I didn't go door to door with a wheelbarrow full of fish, I can tell you that. But I did have the privilege of being under the guidance of my uncle – my father's older brother, and he was a fisherman. I saw how hard he worked and how hard he worked to make a dollar. And how far that dollar went then compared to how far it is going now.

So it certainly hits home when I hear accounts, as my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port said, with respect to the fishery and how hard they worked. And I know that the fishery is an important aspect of our economy today and, as we spoke earlier, the crab fishery brought in a billion dollars. Is that correct? Well, it could be much more than that, Mr. Speaker.

We look at the fishery in our province not only sustaining but to grow and to bring more economic development and to bring more money into the coffers of the province. It is important. I know the former Member for Cape St. Francis was the critic for Fisheries and it was a very good fit for him because his family lived in it and he is now living in that fishery. I applaud him for doing that, for taking on that role. It's no doubt not an easy one, but it's one that he's enjoying and he's making a difference for him, his family and to the coffers of the province. So I applaud him for that.

Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues spoke about affordable housing in their district, and it's no different in mine; I'm surprised to see that it is such an issue in my district, but it certainly is. When you look at the private businessmen, these companies that are building affordable housing in my district – I have to applaud them – before

they've even broken ground, the buildings are spoken for. They're purchased, or they're rented.

So the need is there for affordable housing; we have seniors who are unable to continue to live in their homes. We have seniors who are struggling and they're looking to downsize, and this level of affordable housing in my district is very welcomed. We do not have a large number of it, but it's growing more and more each day with respect to the private business, to the private industry providing affordable housing for residents in my district.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to touch on the public transit. I had a conversation with, again, several residents of the City of St. John's with respect to public transit, and to talk about the expansion on the Metrobus passes. To quote the minister: Metrobus passes are now expanded. It used to be just for those on income support. Now it's for seniors, youth at risk, so we're expanding out the program. And I'm not disagreeing that the program didn't have to be expanded, but I do know that the City of St. John's, the council was quite upset with respect to the expansion of the program and the decrease in the budget.

So for them, it made a difference of \$300,000 with respect to what they could provide and what they were supposed to have to operate, and that does make a hit on the municipality, no doubt. I do know that some years back, when I was mayor, I collaborated with the other mayors in my district, and we tried to have public transit come in to the District of Cape St. Francis. We saw a need for university students; we saw a need for seniors who didn't want to drive downtown to go shopping, but the option was there for an extra route to be put on for Metrobus in my district. And we worked hard for that, and I'll give a shout-out to His Worship from Torbay, who championed that.

But we couldn't get anywhere with it, because it wasn't feasible. It wasn't feasible to put another route on for that particular area of town, and of course I border on the border of St. John's. So that was unfortunate because we thought that we had a good plan to help our seniors, to help our low income, to help our students. Unfortunately, it didn't come to fruition.

That's something that we have to look at with respect to what is required to operate this service. I do know that the City of St. John's has to supplement the Metrobus program each year, and it's becoming harder and harder to do so. I just thought I'd mention that with respect to public transit. It's not available in my district; it's not available in many districts. Of course, most of us in this House, I think it's available to just the city districts and it's unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I know that several colleagues spoke about Crown lands and I'm going to have a – oh, he's just perked right up, as soon as I said it, with respect to Crown lands. It's better than trout.

Mr. Speaker, I do know that I had good conversations with the minister with respect to Crown lands and a particular build in my hometown of Pouch Cove. Habitat for Humanity wanted to come in to do a build in my town with respect to a piece of property, and that was a good thing. A family was going to benefit from this. Unfortunately, we do have some hang-up with Crown Lands. So I'll ask the minister if he'll look into that again. We looked at it some months back and can't seem to make any headway with it, but I would appreciate the minister's help with respect to that. I look forward to your reply on that, Mr. Minister, with respect to that Habitat plan.

I spoke about the fishery earlier and I can't say a lot about fishery in my district. We do have some recreational fishers. The professional fishers do fish out of St. John's or other ports, but I will mention we did have the walrus in Middle Cove. I'd like to applaud the staff that looked after that situation with respect to the amount of public that were at that site. I do know that there were several people who tried to get closer to the walrus. It was for their benefit and safety that they didn't, so I applaud the staff that were on site doing that work and keeping the people safe. Sometimes we just need that little extra reassurance that the staff are there, and I do applaud the staff that took part in that for sure.

Mr. Speaker, just to briefly touch on education, I do know that I'm hearing from many teachers in my district with respect to teacher allocation for the fall. I do know that I've been in contact with

school councils on the French immersion program for Holy Trinity Elementary in Torbay. Currently, they have two classes of French immersion, looking at going back to one in September, with one class of 27. My wife is a kindergarten teacher; I know full well the parameters that teachers operate under. It isn't easy, especially in kindergarten, but when you're bringing in French immersion as well, I do know that 27 is too much, too large of a class for the teacher to make any headway with 27 students teaching a different language.

So I do ask the minister – I did write his department today – and I know that he is listening and I give him credit for listening and for helping out. I do appreciate his attention to that and for the response that I am going to get. I do know that the school council works very hard trying to provide the education for our children and the teachers do the same with respect to French immersion. So I look forward to an update on that, Mr. Speaker.

I'll make one last point, and I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands made it earlier. I can't disagree with him. We are living in extraordinary times; we certainly are. Everything is not as cut and dry as it was or as it appears to be. When we leave the four walls of this hon. House and we go back to our districts, I'm hearing it and I know government Members are hearing it as well; these are difficult times. I am glad and honoured that the residents of Cape St. Francis put me in this position, to speak on their behalf, and to work on their issues and I do thank them for that.

Speaker, I do thank you for your time and your attention and I shall take my seat. Thank you so much.

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

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

All those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Report of Social Services Estimates Committee, carried.

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

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

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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