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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Warr): Good afternoon.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl - Southlands, Ferryland, Bonavista, Terra Nova and Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate winners of this year's Mount Pearl Paradise Chamber of Commerce Best in Business Awards.

This year's banquet was recently held at the Reid Community Centre in Mount Pearl and recognized businesses and business owners alike for their dedication and commitment to the community at large.

This year's nominees and winners are corporate leaders in the community and are very deserving of this honour. Congratulations to O'Neill Automotive Group, selected as this year's Outstanding Business of the Year; Innovation Award winner, Golfshotz; Entrepreneur of the Year, Jacobean Craft Chocolates; Best New Company to Watch Award winner, EASY Safety Training; Community Impact Award winners, Admiralty House Communications Museum and Paradise Physiotherapy; Customer Service Award recipient, Image 4 Digital; Employee of the Year Award winner, Kelly Power of Reddy Kilowatt Credit Union; Resilience Award winner, Sophie's Pet Boutique; and Director's Choice Award winner, Mr. Scott Hillyer of Coffee Matters.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating all of the nominees and winners of this year's Best of Business Awards, as well as the Mount Pearl Paradise Chamber of Commerce for hosting this wonderful event.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate Team NL Bowling on winning the Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers' Youth Challenge national championship in Calgary.

The team members were Jack Walsh from the Goulds, from the Ferryland District. Jack bowls out of Plaza Bowl and was the anchor for the team. Amy Harris is from Paradise. Amy was a member of the Canadian all-star team and bowled lead for her team. Brady Roberts from Southlands, who bowled third in line. Both Amy and Brady bowl out of Paradise Lanes.

Abby Tiller and Jordan Park both from Corner Brook, bowl out of Centre Bowl. Abby was the third bowler in her lineup and Jordan bowled all positions. Art Wells was the male coach and is from St. John's, who represents Plaza Bowl, YBC. Corinna Hogan-Sears was the female coach and lives in CBS. Corinna represents the YBC program at St. Pat's Bowling centre.

Speaker, I'd like to ask all my colleagues of this House to congratulate Team NL for going undefeated in the tournament and bringing home the gold.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, it is an honour to celebrate the exemplary lifetime volunteerism of Joyce Matchem of Bonavista who has dedicated a significant portion of her life volunteering at the Golden Heights Manor long-term care facility in Bonavista.

Born in 1942, Joyce has been volunteering at the manor for nearly 30 years. With her daughter Tracy at her side, her service began with providing nighttime snacks on Thursday nights to the residents where she quickly established friendships throughout. This grew to six days per week visits – except Sundays – to the manor

where she became active in the recreation room hosting bingo games, other recreational activities and whatever was needed of her. Whenever the bus was required to take residents on a field trip, like the seniors' party at the Lion's Club, Joyce was there to lend a hand as well.

Joyce, 80 years of age on November 22, loved taking the lead in the once-per-month birthday celebration for all birthdays occurring in that month – a special event for which she states she is fortunate to be able to do it for as long as she has.

I ask Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the outstanding volunteerism of Mrs. Joyce Matchem of Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past two years the graduating high school students in the District of Terra Nova and, certainly, the entire province have shown resilience, determination and dedication in these uncertain times. They have worked diligently to focus on their high school diplomas. Over the next few weeks, we will see the class of 2022 celebrate their accomplishments with high school graduations taking place. Today, I would like to thank and congratulate each student.

What may seem like the end for some students is really only the beginning. Take pride in how far you have come and have trust in how far you can go.

I wish all graduates of the class of 2022 the strength to face challenges with confidence, along with the wisdom to choose their battles carefully. I wish them the best of luck on their journey and may they always stop to help someone along the way.

Please join me in celebrating the class of 2022 from Clarendville High School, Random Island Academy, Southwest Arm Academy,

Glovertown Academy, Holy Cross School Complex and St. Gabriel's All Grade.

Good luck to all graduates of 2022.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, with Come Home Year scheduled to take place this summer, I would like to recognize a destination for visitors planning to visit our province this summer.

This attraction within the District of Harbour Main is one I had the pleasure of touring last summer. It is the Avondale Railway Station Museum.

This original structure, built in 1887, and with renovations, it has been transformed into a station museum filled with artifacts from the past. An exciting feature is a scenic train ride on original tracks laid by the CN Railway, which from personal experience was absolute fun.

Most impressive was that volunteers within the Town of Avondale operated the entire operation from the tour guide right to the conductor. Visitors from all over the province visited there last summer. For the older guests it brought many fond memories and for the younger, well they got a glimpse of our history.

I ask hon. Members to join me in recognizing the Town of Avondale and the many other volunteers who helped bring this museum to life. I congratulate and wish much success for this Come Home Year summer of celebrations within the Town of Avondale.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Speaker, we were saddened on Friday upon hearing that a pioneer of Inuit self-government on the North Coast of Labrador had passed away.

Jim Lyall truly left his mark on everything he did. He had the distinction as the first elected President of Nunatsiavut, a position he held from 2008 to 2012, following the formation of the Nunatsiavut Government in 2005.

Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe described Jim Lyall as someone who spent a lifetime advancing the rights and issues of all Labrador Inuit. He is remembered for his determination, a strong will and an overriding desire to invoke positive change for the benefit of the community of Nain, where he lived since 1956, and Nunatsiavut.

On occasion when I spoke with Jim about issues, he was articulate and respectful in expressing his beliefs and hopes for a better tomorrow for the beneficiaries and Nunatsiavut.

During the formative years of the Labrador Inuit Association, Jim served as executive director. He also worked for the provincial government stores, served as postmaster in Nain, led the community of Nain as mayor and successfully operated a business in Nain for more than two decades.

Speaker, Jim Lyall passed away only a few hours after his wife Jean passed – an incredibly difficult week for the family. I take this opportunity to express my personal condolences and on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Please join me in reflecting on the contributions of a man who was devoted to family and a friend to everyone.

Rest easy, Sir, your legacy will live on.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Speaker, the Official Opposition joins with the minister in offering condolences on the passing of Jim Lyall. A tireless advocate for the people of Nunatsiavut and the whole of Labrador, Mr. Lyall was a driving force behind Inuit self-government on the North Coast. We are deeply saddened by his passing, as he will be fondly remembered and celebrated by his family, friends and those that he fought for.

Speaker, Nunatsiavut would not be what it is today without Mr. Lyall. The Official Opposition and the Members of this House will mourn this leader who inspired so many.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. The Third Party would also like to extend our condolences to the family, friends and community of Jim and Jean Lyall.

As the first elected president of Nunatsiavut, Jim proved himself to be a powerful and respected Inuit leader, advocating on behalf of those who he represented. A true leader who is beloved by all Labradorians. Jim and Jean will truly be missed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

D. BRAGG: Speaker, Agriculture in the Classroom NL is a fantastic, hands-on program that teaches children where food comes from and how to grow it.

Our department invests \$305,000 in this program every year through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. Nearly 30,000 students are learning about agriculture through initiatives like Canada's Agriculture Day, Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month, the Amazing Agriculture Adventure and the Little Green Thumbs program.

Right now, more than 5,000 Little Green Thumbs and Little Green Sprouts are busy growing nearly 300 gardens at schools all over the province.

As a part of the program's 10th annual harvest celebrations, students will be visiting vegetable and dairy farms, greenhouses and grocery stores to learn more about nutrition and healthy eating.

They will also enjoy fresh, healthy food that they grew themselves.

Speaker, Canada's agriculture industry is facing extraordinary global challenges. As always, we are working closely with farmers and producers, commodity groups and the federal government to support this sector. In these difficult times, our Little Green Thumbs and Little Green Sprouts remind us why a sustainable, reliable food system is so important.

Thanks to Agriculture in the Classroom NL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, students are making a vital connection to the hard-working farmers and producers who dedicate their lives to growing our food.

Thank you to the program staff, teachers, sponsors, farmers and volunteers who make these important programs so successful.

Most importantly, a big green thumbs up to our Little Green Thumbs and Sprouts. I look forward to visiting your school soon and meeting the province's future farmers.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

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

The Official Opposition would also like to take a moment to recognize the good work of individuals involved in Agriculture in the Classroom NL. There has never been a more important time to educate and involve our youth in our food supply.

Speaker, within a single generation, the number of farms in Newfoundland and Labrador has dropped from 3,500 to approximately 500. Of the existing farms, 58 per cent of those operators are over 55; only 4.8 per cent are under 35 years old.

Programs like CAP and initiatives like Little Green Thumbs expose thousands of children to enriching educational experiences that they would otherwise not have had without that opportunity. The experience of growing their own food in a community setting will no doubt inspire young people to consider farming as a real career choice.

Speaker, our job as leaders is to make sure that young farmers have the supports they need in all their farming journey. The further investment in support programs like Little Green Thumbs is the first step in raising a new generation of farmers.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to sincerely thank all the volunteers and educators that make these programs possible for so many young people. They are the future of food security in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, and I congratulate all those who are participating in the Agriculture in the Classroom NL. While such programs do bring awareness of the importance of healthy eating, of sustainable, reliable food systems, they do

little to fix the broader social and economic issues that prevent so many of us from acting on that information. In light of the cost of living, we call on the government to take much-needed action to make good, healthy food more accessible to all the people of the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before we get into Question Period, it's my pleasure to certainly recognize and welcome Chief Brendan Mitchell to the House of Assembly today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Last week the out-of-touch Liberal budget passed, without the Premier taking the time to speak to it during debate.

Is the Premier trying to distance himself from the budget because he realizes it does not help reduce the cost of living on the citizens of this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

I speak to the budget all the time, Mr. Speaker, to the media, to the people in the province, in every community around the province. I'm happy to speak to the budget and the merits of the budget, and how it sets a sustainable path forward for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, at any time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier had many opportunities to do it, to outline what his plan would be, and how his administration would help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We didn't hear any of that during the debate – the nearly 75 hours.

In October 2020, right before the last election, the Premier had no trouble participating in the budget debate. But this year, when people are struggling to afford gasoline and groceries, he was silent. The Premier had three separate hour-long chances to defend his own agenda.

Why did the Premier choose not to outline and defend his plan to help the people of this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

We always welcome healthy debate on the budget and any other piece of legislation before this hon. House, Mr. Speaker. I was quite content with the merits of the budget, Mr. Speaker. We were working very closely with the Minister of Finance the whole time. She spoke quite eloquently to this and defended the merits of the budget for the future of this province.

I am quite content with how the debate has evolved, Mr. Speaker. As I said in the first answer, I have spoken to this many times to the public and to the media. I am happy to support the Minister of Finance and her voice in this hon. House, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Speaker, we are hearing from the people of this province that it was defenseless to be able to argue that this budget helps the people of Newfoundland and Labrador when they are in such a need.

Speaker, people are worried about their health. There's a lack of doctors, nurses and health professionals. There are surgery backlogs. If someone is lucky enough to have a doctor, the price of gas is so high they can't afford to travel to receive care. People don't have enough money to buy food and the cost of everything is soaring.

When people are facing real troubles, why does your administration refuse to help the people of this province address those issues?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

As we said many times before, we are continuing to help the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER A. FUREY: We are continuing to help the people of this province, Mr. Speaker; \$142 million to offset the cost of living right now and we are always responsive. That is what a government should be.

I apologize for the chirping from the Members opposite.

We will continue to evolve. We will continue to be responsive, Mr. Speaker. We have made great progress with respect to the Health Accord, Mr. Speaker, in addressing some of the acute health requirements of the people and then into the future for a sustainable system.

Last week, we met with the NLMA and announced a task force to deal with the surgical backlogs, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Unfortunately, Speaker, it's that side of the House that doesn't understand. It doesn't go far enough. It doesn't do enough to

address the issues that people are facing in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: The government continually tells us the carbon tax is a federal policy that it can't control. The prime minister is coming in town tomorrow. Will the Premier ask the prime minister for permission to lower our provincial gas taxes to reduce the suffering the Liberals have inflicted on the people of this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

The prime minister and I will talk about many different topics as it relates to Newfoundland and Labrador and the federation, in general, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

PREMIER A. FUREY: We will let him see the value of the surgical backlog, the proposal that we are proposing with the NLMA, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the task force.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

PREMIER A. FUREY: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, am I able to get some quiet?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I am only interested in hearing the person that I recognized to speak.

Thank you.

PREMIER A. FUREY: And will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to address the environment, climate change, the carbon tax, all items facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the prime minister, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

I know the people of this province right now, what they're facing, would like the Premier to ask the prime minister one question.

Will you ask him to outline a tax regime that would lower the cost of gasoline and home heating fuel for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when you meet tomorrow?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

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

I've talked to many premiers around this country. This is an issue that's facing every jurisdiction, every province. Everyone is feeling it, Mr. Speaker. And I will certainly address –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER A. FUREY: – this with respect to the concerns and the anxieties that have been provoked in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Of course I will.

I am the first minister and I will address this with the prime minister, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. So that conversation would be great.

Speaker, I understand that there's a report from the fish licensing board on the minister's desk.

When will the minister be making a decision?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much.

I wasn't clear, Mr. Speaker, which report he may be referring to, but there's – it was the fish licensing board, I'm sorry. I'm going to meet with the board and in due time I will make my decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: In due time.

Speaker, this issue has been dragging on for weeks with divisiveness pitting one community against another. The fishery is too important to have communities fight over it. We should be coming together to fight for our province in Ottawa to better manage our fishery resource, not fighting against one another.

When is the minister going to stop playing politics with people's lives and give us a firm decision when the decision will be made?

SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

D. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I take exception to that, playing politics. There's no politics here. This is an industry. It was a billion-dollar industry last year that I take and this side of the House takes very seriously. There will be no knee-jerk reactions when it comes to licensing. It will be thought through, it will be discussed with the board and a decision will be made thereafter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm sure the people involved in the fishing industry await anxiously the result of the minister's decision.

I also hope, Speaker, that the Premier will ask the prime minister's permission to lower our gas prices tomorrow.

But I also ask the Liberal Minister of Finance here: Has she talked to her federal counterpart about getting permission to lower the gas tax to help people of this province who really need it?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's good to see you in the Chair.

I was listening to the Member of the House of Assembly from Bonavista, extraordinary times mean extraordinary measures, and we have taken those extraordinary measures, \$142 million in the budget.

Yes, I do speak to my colleagues across the country. I do ask them how they're managing this very serious situation and the cost of living. I've spoken to many of my colleagues about the measures that they are taking and about how we may be able to utilize some of their experiences and then utilize our experiences on this.

There is \$142 million that we've been able to provide back to the people of the province, money in their pockets. We certainly would like to do more and we're investigating everything that we can do to support the people of the province during these extraordinary times.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: In all of that, the answer was no, she has not asked. The minister hasn't asked.

Speaker, the government is demanding transparency from the very agency who sets the gas prices.

Would it also apply transparency lens to its own self? I ask that and tell us exactly how much money do you collect from the residents, from the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, each time the price of gas goes up by a cent?

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

S. COADY: I'm sure the Member opposite is aware of how the tax system from the provincial gasoline tax works. It does not work on escalating values; it is 14.5 cents per litre. So even if the price goes up, it is still that 14.5 cents. The same with carbon tax, it's the same. It's based on per litre.

The Member opposite might be referring to the HST; that does escalate with the price.

I will say to the Member opposite, as I've said to him last week, we have budgeted no big increase. If he looks at the 2021-22 budget versus the '22-'23 budget, we've budgeted for no major increase in HST. It does take a number of years for that to flow through.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's not about what they're budgeting, it's about what they're receiving. What we're talking about is increased prices in gasoline. That's exactly what I'm talking about, the HST, which increases every single time the price of gas goes up.

Now there are a lot of smart people over in the Department of Finance and I'm sure they could estimate the additional revenue that the minister is collecting.

Will the minister use this additional revenue to rebate back the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are struggling with the cost of gas?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I echo the Member opposite's comment that there are very smart people in the Department of Finance who work very, very hard, and around the clock, Speaker. We have some very good public servants in Newfoundland and Labrador and I'm very proud of all of them.

I will say to the Member opposite, as I have said in this House, as the Premier has said publicly and as I have said publicly: We're certainly considering what we can do to assist the people of this province with the cost of living. We have already provided \$142 million. We recognize and realize the cost of living is still increasing because of the fuel prices, Speaker, and we will be doing something, I'm sure, to support those people as we move forward.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again we've heard that the minister is considering doing something. I suggest that the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador cannot wait until the fall for something to be done. It needs to happen now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So why is the minister choosing not to move forward and implement a home heat rebate program now? Make the announcement now; let the people know.

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

S. COADY: The Member opposite realizes that I have already made that announcement and already put that on both the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: Of which both the home heat rebate has been rolled into those programs. We have already done that. We are looking at what we're going to do to continue to support the people of the province. I have already said that in this House. The Premier has already said that publicly.

We're working to see what we can do, further to the \$142 million we have already provided back, but one thing is for sure, Speaker, this side of the House – indeed everybody in this Chamber today recognizes the tremendous impact that the cost of living is having on the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, is it possible that this government does not understand that the people of this province are at a breaking point?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: And that their refusal to help them is callous and unconscionable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, last week when I asked the Minister of Justice why Elizabeth Fry organization did not receive funding in the budget he said, "... there was no formal funding request from that group" However, an ATIPP response we received indicated that the minister met with Elizabeth Fry about their funding request.

Would the minister like to take the opportunity now to correct the statement he made last week?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

I will say that I don't need to correct that fact that I did say last week that I did meet with Elizabeth Fry when they opened up their new

office here in St. John's. I'm sure we discussed a number of things, including funding and working together with them as they go forward here, to work to help all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that unfortunately do have to deal with the justice system.

I will add as well, Speaker, that in the event that there is a request or a need for beds – which is something that Elizabeth Fry is looking to do; there is no need for beds at this point in time. But if and when that does occur, as it will be an open process, a request for proposals will be put out and certainly Elizabeth Fry, if they want to bid at that time, they can and it will be done in a fair and thorough and even process for all groups that want to make an application for those beds.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, he indicated last week that there was no formal funding request from that group. That was incorrect. On August 18, 2021, the Ministers of Finance, Justice and Public Safety, Women and Gender Equality met with the Elizabeth Fry Society regarding their request for funding from all three departments.

How can the minister say that there was no request for funding while three ministers, including himself, met with them? He said that last week, he did not.

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I'll just say that I did meet with the group from Elizabeth Fry when they had their office opening here in St. John's, and we discussed a number of initiatives and how they could contribute to the justice programs here in the province, and I'm sure one of the things that did come up was money, as it always does with groups like this.

We look forward to working with them in the future. As I said, again, if there's any need for beds, which is one thing that they supply in this province, or are wanting to supply in this province for individuals who leave the justice system, the prison system, it will certainly be a formal request for the proposal process. We'll follow government guidelines and they can make that application and we'll deal with them accordingly, as we would with any other group, in a fair, open and transparent manner.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Maybe if we didn't spend \$5 million in the US, we might have a bit left over.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We have hearing a lot of people who are really frustrated. The minister himself has said people are frustrated with the price of gasoline.

Can the minister outline how exactly transparency will ease people's frustrations?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I absolutely agree with the Member that people are very frustrated with the price of gas. We have on the Order Paper now changes to the *Petroleum Products Act*, which will increase transparency to the work that the Public Utilities Board does.

One thing in particular I'm very interested in understanding is exactly how they use the interruption formula. So that information is an internal procedure document within the Public Utilities Board, and that's one of the first things that I'm going to request once we make changes to the *Petroleum Products Act*.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

An interruption should happen right now for the people of this province, not waiting five or six months. Transparency is good, but what people need is a reduction in the price of gasoline. The minister said this past weekend – and I quote – we think that the current model works. These are your words.

How can the minister say that the current model works when people can't afford to fill their cars?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

So in terms of the current process where you have the Public Utilities Board regulating the price of gas, we have spent – this House – over a day, I think, talking about and debating that bill. None of my Members, none of my colleagues have brought up the issue around regulation.

We currently have regulation; it's been in place for over 20 years. It's a challenge. There's no perfect solution. The price of gas globally is extremely high. The current process ensures that there is a maximum price. Retailors and wholesalers do not have to charge the maximum price. I wonder why they are. We only set what the maximum allowed price is – the Public Utilities Board. There is no minimum price.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

We've been debating this budget for a good many weeks and nothing has changed here yet, so we don't need no other applications or anything else to change it. So let's get with it

and change it for the people of the province today or this week. We have the opportunity to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: The minister also said that when changes are expected, the price of gasoline should not be leaked on social media, but no notice for people.

Does the minister realize that many people are saving a few cents per litre means the difference of being able to fill up their car or buy groceries?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Currently in our regulations and legislation, it does indicate when retailors are told the new maximum price on a Thursday that they should keep that confidential.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important that our public safety officials, for example, are able to access gas. We wouldn't want to limit and have a run on supply, for example. I would challenge the Member: So he's suggesting getting rid of regulation? If we got rid of regulation, there would absolutely be no maximum price and you could not predict when that change would happen.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

There are no fears of a run on supply with the prices still going up and up – not going to happen.

Last week we learned of a document that was critical of cybersecurity issues at Newfoundland

and Labrador's largest health authority. That was presented over two years ago.

When a cybersecurity expert tells the Liberal government the system has numerous vulnerabilities, security concerns and compliance issues, and this is ignored, whose fault is it when thousands of people are harmed?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Nice to see a fresh face in the Chair.

The issue around the document the Member opposite is referring to is an unsolicited business proposal from a private company; it went to Eastern Health, which was concerned with the security and integrity of biomedical equipment. This is gone to their Centre for Innovation, which is a centre we support, but is in no way related to the cyber incident of last year.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Minister.

Unsolicited or not, it was the cybersecurity experts who presented this.

I remind the minister, this issue has cost the government at least \$16 million directly and untold security issues facing thousands of residents in the province.

The minister is trying to play down what is an incredibly serious situation.

Why does the minister say in one breath that there's nothing to this story and in another breath that Eastern Health is the problem and contact them?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Once again, Eastern Health has a Centre for Innovation. This was an unsolicited business proposal from an outside company looking to sell something. It was around the security of biomedical equipment and is in no way related to the subsequent cyber incident that we had in October of last year. The two are completely separate.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

When my gas light comes on – unsolicited – I check the oil. That's what I do; I check the oil. That's what it does right.

The Liberals used security concerns to hide from accountability.

Will they place the hidden –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. DINN: – documents in the hands –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you for the protection from all the heckling we're getting here today.

It is a serious issue. The Liberals used security concerns to hide from accountability.

Will they place the hidden documents in the hands of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who has the expertise to protect security while letting the public see what they ought to be seeing about the shocking and preventable cyberattack?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

An interesting preamble to the question, but to deal with the cyber incident, which is separate from the issue around the Centre for Innovation. We have retained national and international security experts to advise us through this process, Mr. Speaker. I, this government, are following their recommendations. We would be foolish to do any less. We are consistent with other jurisdictions who have also found themselves in this unfortunate position.

We will await, with interest, the result of the RCMP investigation from a criminal perspective and also the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, the minister dismissed concerns of farmers who said their operations are in jeopardy because of rising prices. He said it was the first he'd hear of it.

This government has a pattern of ignoring the concerns that people raise instead of listening to them. Farmers in jeopardy impacts our food security.

When will the Liberals start reaching out to farmers in trouble to help them supply food to our province?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you, Speaker.

I think the Member may have taken out of context what I said. What I did say is that we have \$10.8 million in programs that's readily available to our farmers. I encourage those farmers to reach out to our department and see if there is any of these programs they could avail of.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: We took that from farmers. I don't think they took it out of context.

When asked about farmers last week, the minister referred to the James Bond movie, *The World Is Not Enough*, saying, basically, that you can never satisfy these people.

Does the minister believe that the forecasted food shortage is a joking matter?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite has taken me out of context. That's what I said about the Members opposite. Everything is never enough. Not enough. Not enough. That's been their theme. Last year, it was I don't know. I don't know. But this year it's never enough.

We are doing what we can for the farmers in our province with the programs that we have. I am ready to reach out and we are ready to talk to any farmer that needs to have a discussion. My ADM has been reaching out to farmers to see how they are doing.

I have some prominent farmers in my contact list who have yet to reach out to me. I encourage these folks to reach out to me as well.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: A farmer interviewed last week said there is a very real danger of people losing their farms.

The Liberals say they are trying to promote farming and food security but why do their actions speak otherwise?

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

D. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I would hope the Member opposite would come and visit some of our farms and see what we are doing. In Wooddale alone, in his district, 4.5 million transplants last year that we put out to the farmers. That is doing our part to help the farmers. And out of these transplants, Mr. Speaker, about 100 per cent success in the grow rate. That was turnip, cabbage, I don't think there was carrots, but leek and there was four or five other things that I can't think of right now. But we are doing what we can to help the farmers here in this province.

We have more than eligible and willing staff that would go out to any farm to have any discussion with any farmer in this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Last week, Central Health advertised that they were hiring a virtual emergency room diversion coordinator, but the next day the posting was changed, removing the reference to the diversions.

Does this mean that patients who need an emergency room in Central Health will no longer be diverted?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There was indeed an advert that was poorly worded. I think the correct description of that job advert should've been a diversion avoidance coordinator. That has been remedied. This is to make sure that there are adequate virtual ER supports for those communities where there are physician shortages or challenges with provision of hands-on service. That service has been well received across Central Health and indeed is working in other regions in the province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Alberta has applied a \$150 rebate directly to electrical bills over three months to offset the rising costs of living.

I ask the minister: Why are we not doing something similar for our residents to help with the increasing cost? People need direct help today.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Happy to have a question from the Member opposite. I appreciate what Alberta is doing; certainly, it's a good step. I'd like to point out the \$5.2 billion that we reached an agreement with Ottawa to provide to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as it relates to the costs coming from Muskrat Falls. I think that works out to about \$2,400.

So the reality is that we are well above what Alberta is doing and that's something that we'll continue to try to do to ensure that we don't endure complete rate shock.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Will the Minister of Finance commit to directing revenue from the carbon taxes into electrical regional public transit services so that we can leverage our fair share of the \$14.9 billion that the federal government is investing in clean transit over the next eight years?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I can say that we're always interested in supporting our transit system. We have been working with the federal government. Of course, as you know, the federal government has made a commitment to both affordable housing and transit. We are prepared to match that funding. It's approximately \$4 million. It is winding its way through the House of Commons right now. I've already had a discussion with the mayor of St. John's and will be meeting with him, because it will be \$8 million that we can use for affordable housing and transit.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The City of St. John's released a statement last week explaining that the price of fuel is fully \$1 per litre above the 2022 budget. Metrobus expects on average this year of approximately \$1.4 million. There is \$4.136 million allocated to Newfoundland and Labrador of federal emergency funding for ongoing COVID-induced transit operation revenue shortfalls for 2022. This funding is conditional on provincial matching and, as such, the city is calling on the province to confirm it will be applying for this important federal relief.

Can the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs provide this confirmation?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I just confirmed that, yes, we have applied for that amount of money. As the Member opposite said, it is \$4.136 million and we have applied for that money; it is winding its way through the House of Commons right now. We will be matching that money. It is used for both affordable housing, as well as transit, and we'll be having a discussion with the mayor of the City of St. John's concerning the same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Can the Minister of Education confirm that the NLESD hired a private legal firm to fight the Churchill family, who is seeking equitable education for their deaf child?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think that question is better directed to the NLESD. I didn't sign off on the hiring of any firm; that would be the NLESD itself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Since the department is in the process of integrating the NLESD into the department, I would assume it would certainly be within their purview.

The family would like to know how the Department of Education and government can justify NLESD hiring of a private legal firm at \$400 an hour to defend what they believe is discrimination of their 11-year-old deaf child while claiming to have no money to address other urgent issues facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if the Member heard the response to the last question that he asked, but I think those questions are better directed to the NLESD. At which point the NLESD is brought into government, Mr. Speaker, that would be our responsibility but they still have responsibility, at the moment, for operational and other issues, and we don't interfere with their operational issues at this time. If we did, the Member would have a different set of questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre for a quick question, please.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I am hearing from schools who are facing a significant loss of their technology, such as Chromebooks and other devices, because they are being pulled from use because they are deemed insecure and a security risk.

I ask the minister: What plans does the Department of Education have to help schools replace these devices that they are losing as a result of this decision?

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the Member last week said that the Chromebooks that were purchased out of the \$20 million are being taken out of service, which is completely inaccurate, Mr. Speaker. All of the Chromebooks that were put in service for Grade 7 through 12, out of the \$20 million purchase to ensure that schools had those and students had those especially during COVID, are in use.

What the Member is referring to are Chromebooks that were purchased by schools prior to government stepping in and doing this and some of those devices are quite old. As he may or may not understand, electronics don't last forever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to table this document, as requested last week. This is the jurisdictional scan conducted in relation to Bill 58.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend Revenue Administration Act No. 5, Bill 63.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

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

D. BRAGG: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act, Bill 61.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further Notices of Motion?

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

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Child And Youth Advocate Act, Bill 62.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that the following private Member's motion, which will be seconded by the Member for Labrador West, and this has to do with just transition legislation for Newfoundland and Labrador.

WHEREAS the science unmistakably tells us that we need a 45 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and a 90 per cent reduction by 2050 in order to avoid ruinous climate change; and

WHEREAS the Secretary-General of the United Nations recently noted that addiction to fossil fuels is mutually assured destruction and that the world is sleepwalking to climate catastrophe; and

WHEREAS the effects of climate change are already harming people of this province according to the final report of the Health Accord, through more frequent and destructive weather events, disappearing sea ice in Labrador, or through toxic pollution; and

WHEREAS any new development of offshore oil and gas extraction is incompatible with keeping our international commitments, meeting our obligations to future generations and averting global disaster; and

WHEREAS the major economic transformations of the past were carried out without consideration for workers in phased-out industries; and

WHEREAS former Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney stated in the fall of 2021 that the green transition is the greatest commercial opportunity of our age, and estimates from Stanford University predict the creation of one to three million new jobs in Canada as we transition towards safe and renewable energy; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador stands to gain by entering early in the green technology sector, since we are blessed with some of the strongest, renewable energy resources in North America, a rapidly growing technology sector, world-class education and research facilities, and opportunities to gain federal funding for building this industry; and

WHEREAS our workers in the oil and gas sector already have the skills and know-how needed to build the new green industries and are therefore well placed to take advantage of this unique opportunity; and

WHEREAS a 2021 survey conducted by the *Atlantic Quarterly* found that more than four out of five Nova Scotians and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians not only wanted a transition to renewable and efficient energy but also support for affected workers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this government prepare for the coming decline of the fossil fuel industry and make sure that the affected workers themselves become leaders in the change by introducing just transition legislation in this House, ensuring high-quality union jobs, guaranteeing workers who want to entre the new industries receive the supports they need to do so and ensuring local communities are the primary beneficiaries of the green transformation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this government recognize the gravity of the climate emergency by introducing a climate and energy bill in this House that stipulates a planned phase-out of the oil and gas industry, sets a clear targets so that by 2050, 85 per cent or more of the total energy consumption in this province is clean energy, guarantees that all renewable energy production, distribution and service remain in public hands, and commits to positioning our economy, research centres and businesses to benefit from provincial, national and international efforts to create new and renewable energy resources in wind, hydro and solar.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this House urge the Government of Canada to establish a new statutory office of climate accountability with a climate accountability officer whose mandate would be to guide policy and targets, work with industry to help advance low-carbon industry and infrastructure and review, audit and report to this House annually on government, business and economy-wide progress on legislative reductions of greenhouse gas pollution of 45 per cent by 2030 and 90 per cent by 2050.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

This will be our PMR that will be debated on Wednesday.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution.

Be it resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

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

WHEREAS subsection 7(1) of the act states that a commissioner may be reappointed; and

WHEREAS the appointment of the following commissioners expire on June 22, 2022: Peggy Bartlett and Gerald Anderson; and

WHEREAS it is proposed that the said commissioners be reappointed as commissioners for a term of three years from the date of the expiry of their terms, and

WHEREAS the appointment of Philip R. Earle expires on May 24, 2022, and is not eligible for reappointment; and

WHEREAS the chairperson Earle Ludlow has resigned as chairperson and as a commissioner; and

WHEREAS subsection 6(4) of the act provides that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council

designate one of the members of the commission to be the chairperson;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following persons be appointed or reappointed as members of the Independent Appointments Commission for a term of three years: Karen McCarthy, chairperson; William Mahoney; Brendan Mitchell; Jamie Schwartz; Peggy Bartlett; and Gerald Anderson.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Seniors Advocate Act* provides that on resolution of the House of Assembly, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a Seniors' Advocate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Susan Walsh be appointed as the Seniors' Advocate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 18, 2022, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and, if not adjourned earlier, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Sorry, getting ahead.

Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 19, 2022.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The residents of Pollard's Point are concerned with the recent decision of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture who reduced timber lot sizes for domestic cutting use in the White Bay South area and, in particular, the area commonly known as Pinksen's Road.

This area of Pinksen's Road has been used for domestic cutting by residents of Pollard's Point for years and with the decision residents can no longer cut firewood and logs in this traditional cutting area. The department did not open another area, but the area in question is inaccessible to the general public.

Therefore, we urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reverse this decision and allow residents to continue to cut in the traditional area of Pinksen's Road.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that was sent to me from the residents of Pollard's Point and Sop's Arm. I think every resident up there has signed this one. They've been trying to get the attention of the Forestry Department to make some decisions. It's something that I've heard all across the province, actually, in regard to permits. There's a five-year plan. It seems like all the permits are allotted to the bigger players. There are permits to get, but, like I said in the House the other day, where you can get to, a permit that's high in the country, high up in the

mountains, you want to be a billy goat to get there.

So people need their regular domestic permits to be able to go cut some firewood and to be able to get in there. So the residents of Pollard's Point would like for the government to sit down and talk to them and reverse this decision and give some accessible permits back to the residents of Pollard's Point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I thank the Member for presenting the petition.

I trust the guidance of our very expert staff that we have in the department that would go out and do a five-year forestry management plan. If they've changed it from one domestic area to another, I'm sure it's not that far of a drive, if it's not even closer.

I will look into it and just see if there is a distance. But I do know and I do trust the people that work to make these decisions.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

Orders of the Day

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Oh, no more petitions. Sorry, my apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, Bill 49.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I've received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

SPEAKER: All rise.

Dated the 9th day of May 2022:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of sums required for the Public Service for the Province for the year ending 31 March 2023, by way of further Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of section 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____
Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to the Committee of Supply.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It has been moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Trimper): Order, please!

We are now reviewing the resolution to be submitted in the Committee of the Whole House

in relation to the granting of Supply to Her Majesty and related Bill 49.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023, the sum of \$5,219,818,600."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

I am pleased to speak on Supply today, I am aware that I have approximately 15 minutes. There is a lot to say, Mr. Chair.

The first thing I want to do is to direct a few questions, because just from Question Period today it had become quite apparent that this government is not aware that the people of this province are at a breaking point. They are not aware of what is happening outside the walls of Confederation Building.

I'm going to ask the government to consider and ponder a few questions. So each one of the government Members, please consider this. Are you aware that there are people who can no longer afford to drive to work? That is a reality. This is not politics; this is not rhetoric. We are hearing from people in our district that are indicating that they cannot afford to drive to work, Mr. Chair.

I have heard and I have testimonials. I put it on my Facebook page this morning saying that I am going to be addressing this in the House of Assembly, let me know what your concerns are so I can raise them. Already I have three, just in a brief period of time, and lengthy emails. And I'm going to repeat: I am going to make you listen. You are sitting here; you have to listen to what the people are saying. There are going to be more coming in, I'm sure, as the week goes by.

Are you aware that there are people that cannot afford to buy food? Now this may sound angry – I think I just heard a little chirp there, that it sounds angry. Well, do you know what? People are angry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: People are angry. And where is this anger coming from? It's coming from fear, Mr. Chair. It's coming from fear.

I was at two events this week where I was meeting with people out in the District of Harbour Main and that's all they talked about is how they're going to survive. I talked to seniors. I talked to younger people, young families, a couple who have a young family. I've talked to so many people, and we've all heard the same thing. I'm sure you must have heard the same thing on your side of the House here.

There are people who can no longer afford to drive to work; there are people who cannot afford to buy food. Are you aware that there are people that cannot even drive to medical appointments? They can't drive to the grocery stores. They can't afford to heat their homes. They cannot afford to heat their homes. People are being forced to make difficult decisions. Our people in the province are being forced to consider their living arrangements, whether they should live where they are or do they need to try to get somewhere closer to where they work so they can get to their jobs.

So people are exploring opportunities. I've heard this as well, and I've got emails, which I will read out throughout the night, as long as we sit. If it's until midnight, so be it. And tomorrow night and Wednesday night and Thursday night, that's why we are here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: There are people exploring opportunities to live closer to work, they are choosing whether to put food on their table or turn on the heat. This is not rhetoric, Mr. Chair. This is not rhetoric. These are the concerns we're hearing from people. I've even heard from people who operate gas stations who said that there are people committing

offences, they're stealing gas at the pumps. This is how desperate things are getting. They are stealing gas at the gas pumps. They're stealing food in the grocery stores. This is reality.

We hear the government say, well, there's \$142 million. Well, that money – it is not enough. Where it's been directed, the priorities, Mr. Chair, are out of whack. They're just out of whack. They're not in touch with the people that this government represents. The people are saying that it's not enough.

I am going to start off reading a couple of emails. One gentleman from South River said: People are wondering why the cost of groceries are going up. He says it is because of the fuel prices going up. The government are using all kinds of excuses. This is his words. He understands the purpose of different taxes and especially the carbon tax. He said to keep emissions down, but he said this will drive up fuel prices more. The next thing, again, groceries are going up.

The important point about what his email was, Mr. Chair, is he said that the Minister of Finance and the Premier say they are helping the most vulnerable with their big number of \$142 million, but guess what? That did not help. It is not helping the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

I have heard from another constituent. I was speaking with her and she explained, and also put this in a note that they are looking to try to find ways to deal with this reality. She works in town. She had to fill up two vehicles yesterday. It cost her \$300. She drives from the community of Marysvale to St. John's for work. This week alone – so that was just this past week – she has put \$160 in her own vehicle and that was only Thursday. She said she carools, also, with two other people and she is lucky about that because she doesn't know how she would do it without the carpool.

She also told about her mother – explained that her mother is a widow and a senior and she has got an income of approximately \$1,600 per month. And do you know what she said? Her mother called her this week; her mother, who is a senior, called her this week crying on the phone because she had her oil tank filled up and

the bill was \$1,700 and she did not know how she was going to pay for it. She didn't know.

Mr. Chair, we hear that there are plans that the government and the minister has said we will consider a home heating rebate. Consider it. It seemed like there was a suggestion that maybe later in this year. But do you know what? People need help now.

This is causing anxiety, as I just read from this note. It is causing anxiety amongst so many seniors because they don't know what they are going to do once the fall comes. If they don't receive some help, they're not going to be able to do it.

Chair, I've got another call to our office from a person from Kelligrews. He called to express his concern surrounding the high cost of living and the cost of oil. He informed our office that the oil companies are holding people hostage, because you have to order a minimum of \$300 worth of oil. Now, that was his view. He's like, how is this possible, I mean, you've got to order a minimum? And he said some of the companies want a minimum of 250 litres of oil before they will come for a delivery.

He is retired; he worked for 33 years in health care. He says there are so many ways to save money in health care. And he says the ones making the big decisions need to start to check with the people working on the ground. They would be able to tell you how to save the money. That's what he's talking about: reaching out to front-line workers. Which is apparent that this government does not do.

Chair, there are so many people that are suffering right now. I also heard from another individual. I'm going to read this verbatim, this email. She was from I believe it was Clarke's Beach. She said: "I write this email to you as a concerned resident of Newfoundland and Labrador, on behalf of myself, my senior mother and in-laws, and my growing daughter. As you are all well aware, the cost of living now is atrocious! The cost of gas and other fuels is beyond acceptable and those costs are impacting other products and services, like food for example.

"As it stands right now in our province, I wouldn't doubt if most of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are nearing poverty. Everything is going up, except for wages and salaries." And, Chair, I heard that when I was out in my district this week. I heard a number of people say that, that the price of gas, that the price of fuel, home heating oil, everything is going up. But the wages aren't; the salaries aren't. So how are people going to do it?

She said: My mother, a single widow, now has to decide whether to eat or have heat. She's contemplating giving up her car, her very source of independence, because of rising costs. People are being forced to consider things they normally wouldn't have had to do. And how is this affecting their mental health and families?

Actually, she's from South River because she said: "I know I chose to live in South River so my daughter could be raised close to family, in a quiet and safe neighbourhood, enjoying the same things I did as a child. All the costs are going to get worse, if government does not step in and take appropriate action! People of the province will be left to make difficult decisions, about whether to put food on the table or turn on the heat." She went on to describe some of the other potential consequences of committing offences.

So, Mr. Chair, this is another constituent who just doesn't understand. I spoke to her as well, personally. She said she doesn't understand why government is not taking appropriate and positive action now – right now. Listen to the people. These are the people that you represent. These are the people that you are here to govern, yet there's no response.

I do have three minutes left and I want to refer to someone else who contacted me, as well, within the district. She as well was very reflective. In her email she said: Look, there's considerable blame on rising costs because of the war in Ukraine. I mean, these are savvy people that are reaching out. The people of this province are very savvy. They know what's going on. But they don't understand the lack of action by this government. They don't understand the excuses that are being put forward.

But she said there's considerable blame on rising costs because of the war in Ukraine. While

global commodity markets do impact gas prices, the simple fact is there are multiple government taxes, both provincial and federal, on gas. But she said blaming this all on the Ukraine is insultingly simplistic and a deflection. It's a deflection of the role that his government plays.

She looked at some of the math, and she does not understand. She said when I looked at the math, more than a week ago, it was approximately 25 per cent tax on every litre of gas. This was back on May 12, so it was a week before that. She said there's a tax because of Come By Chance, but that's been sold. So why are taxpayers still subsidizing this? A legitimate question.

There's a government tax on gas and then HST on top of that government tax. So we tax the tax here. Then she talked about no public transportation outside of metro, no provincial trains or buses like other provinces. We have no choice but to buy gas and to drive our cars on terrible roads, riddled with potholes and crumbling infrastructure.

Forcing people – Chair, I know I only have a minute left, but she basically said in the last paragraph – there was a lot that she had to say – government is out of touch, government is entrenched and they're repetitive with endless talking points. That bears repeating: Government is out of touch, entrenched and repetitive with endless talking points.

She said there could be ways to find savings, very easily, but this government, their priority choices have been wasteful in many occasions. She was very, very concerned, very critical, and she was very frustrated. That's why she said she reached out to me as her MHA. There are going to be more people, Mr. Chair, reaching out. I'm encouraging them; speak up. Let this government know how you feel. They have to know the concerns that you express.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I next recognize the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate being recognized. I listened intently to the Member for Harbour Main. I can tell you I have never experienced in a House of Assembly, nor in the House of Commons, such personal attacks. I was called callous and unconscionable today, which certainly means that I have feelings of no sympathy, no empathy, indifference to suffering. I can assure the Member opposite that is not the case.

I was also in this particular discourse this afternoon; I thought that the Member opposite really did talk about the fear and the anger. And I can appreciate that, but it's certainly not personal. I can tell you that I, nor this government, we did not have impact on the supply chain issues, nor did we start the war in Ukraine. All we've been trying to do in this budget is find a balance – a balance between providing monies for the priority issues of the people of this province.

We've provided \$400 million additional to health care, because we certainly understand that there are health care challenges. We've provided, I think it was close on \$70 million in education, because we wanted to support young families in assisting with child care. We wanted to support the 1,000 new children in school with extra teaching supports. We thought that that was very important to the people of the province.

I heard the Member for Windsor Lake a moment ago and I can certainly say that we provided money for safety and security, additional money for search and rescue, additional money for first responders in this budget.

I heard the Members opposite talk about our transportation system: 11,000 kilometres of roads. So we provided \$10 million more to assist with providing more pavement for those roads. We provided \$5 million extra for community groups.

We have balanced those priorities with cost of living return so we provided for the most vulnerable by giving a 10 per cent increase in Income Supplement and a 10 per cent increase in the Seniors' Benefit. In the St. John's area, we provided free bus passes. In other areas, we did

other things. We also provided for everyone in this province, because we recognized the impact of the cost of gasoline, we provided a 50 per cent reduction in the fees around registering your vehicle. We eliminated the 15 per cent retail sales tax on home insurance. We're looking to impact as many people as possible and put money back in their pockets.

I can tell you that we have tried to touch, in the first instance, the most vulnerable. We impacted over 160,000 individuals in this province with the reduction in the fees for your vehicle registration and for your home insurance, we impacted many, many more hundreds of thousands.

What I can say here is there is no magic bullet. There is no money tree that I can go to. Every cent that I have just announced, in terms of the \$142 million – it is a lot of money, Chair, that amount of money that we provided, we had to borrow it. So we have borrowed from our children and our grandchildren for today.

Now, we all know interest rates are rising. By borrowing that money, we're having an impact for generations to come.

Now, I have said in this House of Assembly, I have said publicly, and the Premier has said publicly: We are looking at what we can do further. We have provided to the people of the province the entire amount we collect on the provincial gas tax. We are looking at what further we can do. We recognize that the people of the province are impacted. As we move forward through this year, they will continue to be impacted and we're concerned about that.

But being personally attacked in this House of Assembly, Chair, quite frankly, is wrong. All I ask is that we are well able to debate the issues by saying what the concerns are. We hear concerns, too. I have friends; I have family. I meet people in grocery stores and on the street in my district all the time. We hear their concerns and we know those concerns are heard across the country and around the world.

We are doing our very best, as I would expect everyone in this House to do, to ensure that we provide as much as we possibly can back to the people of the province. So \$142 million has been

provided at this point in time. I've given my assurances, as we move through things and move through and understand what more revenues we may be able to collect, what we can possibly do in terms of savings, then we will be able to provide the people with additional supports.

We've committed to doing that. It's not that we're wanting to hold on to the money here. It's not that we want to burden the people of this province. Indeed, I can tell the people of this province, I can tell the Members opposite, to rest assured I do have a conscience. I do feel deeply the concerns of the people of the province. That's why we made some of the very, very challenging and difficult decisions that we have already to make sure that we can support the most vulnerable, to make sure that we can provide money back.

It won't be enough. There's not enough in the world right now with the high price of gasoline and the high price of fuel and the high price of food. There are going to be challenges. We recognize that. But I can say we will do our absolute best that we can to provide for the people of the province.

We are investigating – not investigating, we are moving forward on ways that we can be able to provide additional supports and additional supplements and we're going to continue to do that, as best we can, Chair. That is what we do.

The bill that we are debating today is approval of the *Supply Act, 2002*. It's the main Supply. It's been introduced at the conclusion of the budget debate, and approval of this bill that we're debating this afternoon is to ensure funds are available to meet the government expenditures during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. It gives us the ability to be able to provide those rebates that I spoke about. It gives us the ability to provide the money back to the people of the province. It gives the ability to provide money for health and education and safety and security and the other major things that we have to do in this province. It provides legislative authority to be able to meet the financial obligations of this province. It's basically a routine administrative measure.

I can understand the passion and concern that we all share about this rising cost of living. Look, I share it as well. But I am faithfully and dutifully trying to ensure that we have a balance. We have money to invest where we need it invested: health care, education, safety, security, better transportation, investments in new infrastructure for education, as well as some of the other priorities of the cost of living and helping the most vulnerable and helping people transition. This is a reality that we are faced with, Chair, and I know that you've spoken very passionately as well about the transition that is under way and the needs to address climate change.

I know we've had some taunting back and forth in this House about the money that we have provided to help people transition to from oil to electricity in their homes. Now that is stackable, we give \$5,000. There's more money available through Housing, there's more money available from the federal government. I think it's about \$15,000 to help people transition from oil to electricity.

We have provided money to help people buy electric vehicles. And I realize – I fully realize that not everyone can do that. But those that can, we have provided a stipend to assist them in being able to afford to transition. That stipend of \$5,000 that we have provided to move from oil to electrical home heat is a help, especially when it's stacked on top of the other stipends that are available.

We've provided \$2,500, Chair, for those that are looking at purchasing a new vehicle or even a used electric vehicle so that they can stack that on top of the monies that are being offered by the federal government to have a discount on electrical vehicles.

Chair, I honestly do feel that we have addressed the most vulnerable: increases in the Seniors' Benefit, increases in Income Supplement, bus passes, to name just a few things. We also provided a \$400 cheque to income support. Those families that are on income support, we also provided them with \$400 cash. That's helping the most vulnerable.

We also helped all regular families in this province. We also helped every regular family in this province who has a vehicle, who is impacted

by the price of fuel. We have helped them. And we also a provision for people who wish to transition.

Chair, look, is there more to be done?
Absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

S. COADY: Is there more we want to do?
Absolutely – absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

If the Member has a conversation, he can take it outside, please.

Thank you.

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

S. COADY: I will say when I listened to the Member from Harbour Main, she did say one thing that I completely agree with: People of this province are savvy. They understand that this is not brought by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. They also understand that there is not a finite amount of money. They also understand that we are borrowing from future generations. They also understand that we have provided \$142 million.

What I am hearing and what I accept is that more needs to be done and that, I can assure you, we are considering. But in order to be able to do even what I have announced in budget, even what I said that we want to do, we have to move forward with the Supply Act. This goes in concert with the Interim Supply that was debated in March of this year to ensure that we have the sufficient authority for government to move forward on its financial obligations.

Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

I now recognize the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

It is a pleasure to be able to get up in the House and thank the residents, again, from the Ferryland District for voting me in, and they voted me in for a reason. That was to come in here and speak publicly on issues and debates concerning the budget and concerning their cost of living.

While I was listening to the Member for Harbour Main get passionate about her speech – she is not talking to the Finance Minister personally; she is talking to the government. To take that personally is wrong. She is here representing her district and for people who go over there on the other side and say that that is not happening. Well, that is what we are here to do, and that is what she is doing. She listened to that.

So it is her frustration level and then you get up and you don't listen. So she is listening to that out in her district, out at events. It is the same as I did when I went down to Foodland yesterday and a lady said: Well, I know this is not the place to bring it up. But it is the place to bring it up. I am there to represent you Monday to Sunday. Whatever day of the week it is, if you have an issue, you can tell me.

I am not going down there to shy away from people. I am going down there to get somebody – if they have an issue on their mind, then you know what? They are going to tell you, and I am glad they do tell you. And that is what she is here to do and that is what I am here to do.

We are the Opposition and we are here to bring up issues that are brought to us in our district, and she is doing it very eloquently without people pointing fingers back as us saying we are not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We are here debating this budget and this budget came out on April 7 and the price of gas has gone up – I don't know the number offhand – but what have she done since the budget? This is what people are worried about right now, and these are the issues that are here in all districts. Not only mine, everybody here, 40 districts, everybody got the same

concern. So since the budget came down, this is where the issues are. People need a break; they need something to help them make it through this summer.

The price of fuel is gone through the roof; we need a break. That's what they're looking for. Every time you meet someone, that's the discussion: What can you do with the price of fuel? Yes, there's only so much you can do, but you've got HST that you're collecting revenue since the budget, and we haven't done one thing to look at it. We're going to look at it in the fall. People need help now. Why do you think they're asking us?

I get over here and I never know what I'm going to say. But when you sit down and listen to you, listen to the people on the other side there, listen to your answer, and think that we're going to sit here and oh yeah, we'll all vote for it, let's all pass the budget and we'll all go light a fire in the middle of the room and everybody stand around and sing. We're not going doing that.

We're here to fight for people. That's what we're supposed to do. We're not going to sit down and do anything else. We're going to stand up and bring the issues. You wouldn't have to worry about it. Or you'd probably have less to worry about if you didn't give away the money – \$5 million to the US.

So you sit here and talk about we don't have the resources to do it. You gave \$5 million to the US to do an evaluation on our properties. Yeah, no problem. Chair, \$750,000 in Central; where did that go? Do you think that might help the people? We certainly need more than \$5.7 million, for sure, to help out all the residents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

But we're not going to stand here and be condescended to because we're speaking up for the people in our districts. It's not going to happen. And the more you do it, the more we're coming back. Sorry, we're not sitting down – not happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Oh, it gets me so riled, I tell you. My hands are here shaking. It just gets me so riled up when you listen to – anyway, I'll go

somewhere else because it's not going to be good.

I'll go back to the price of fuel and the fella who texted me last night. A month ago he texted me, on April 1. I went over the prices of fuel. On that fuel, 500 litres, it cost him \$1,111.61. So he sent me another picture last night, and I said, surely to God, that can't be a piece of machinery that's taking 1,675 litres. That can't be a piece of equipment, surely God. But it's a tank. When he went to fill that up – he needs that for his machinery when he goes out on the job – \$4,398.88 to go get that filled up last night.

Now, that gets passed back to consumers. The price is going to go up on his jobs. He's got no other choice. He can't just sit there and eat that cost. It just can't happen. He has to pass that on to other people. Whoever is getting a price on the job is getting a higher price, and the people are going to get less done. We just need a bit of help for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We just need some help on fuel prices. We can't wait until the fall; we need some help now. It just can't wait until the fall.

They say if you take care of the pennies, the dollars take care of themselves. My point would be \$5 million to the US, the Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor. So if we look at that, is that something that you can look over here and say that was a great move to do? I know we have to spend some money – you made an investment in NASCAR, good investment. I'm going to say, over a period of time, I'm sure it will come back to help. You invest to make money; no problem, you're going to get more revenue back. I see that.

We, over here, have said it's timing. It's about the timing of it. Does it need to happen this year? We're in a crisis here now. I look forward to Come Home Year. I have four Come Home Years in my district. I spoke to a lady in Trepassey the other day and their hotel is booked right until September, October. Now, she had some occasional people cancel due to flight prices and the cost of fuel and rental cars. We all know that's an issue and that's not going to go away.

So again it's the timing, when all this was done. But she did say to me that fish last year, when she bought it, was \$3 a pound. Fish right now, for her to buy, is \$7 a pound, and she's getting it out of Nova Scotia because she can't get it here. Seven dollars a pound and the fish are different. She said it's smaller and it's different. Now, I'm not an expert on that. I certainly know about fish. I came from a fishing community; my father was a fisherman. But for her to have to buy her fish from a supplier that's getting it out of Nova Scotia is completely wrong – completely wrong.

We get here talking about climate change and talking about fishery and scientists and all this. We had a moratorium came in in 1992, July 2, my birthday. As I said many times in here, that's 30 years ago that that came in. Thirty years ago, we had scientists tell us that the fishery had to be shut down. Now, they must be some group of scientists; it haven't opened back up yet. It hasn't gotten to a point that it's going to open up yet, by the look of it.

We have a Minister of Fisheries here, we have a seal issue problem and we're not dealing with it. I said before, we'll stand behind you 100 per cent on this side if you do something with seals – 100 per cent. You're a Fisheries Minister; what are we doing for the fishery? You're pitting communities against each other now for processing licences. That's what we're doing in the processing industry for fishery, pitting communities against each other. One group don't want it, the other group do. I mean, that is wrong. That is totally wrong the way that we have ministers here that we have to – there is stuff that we could do. We are a fishing province; that is our first thing. Yes, we're trying to go to oil, or we've been at oil and now we're going to go green. All right, but our first priority in this province is the fishery.

What do we do with the fishery? How many news releases have we come out with on fishing? We know what kind of tangle it is, that's for sure, and we have very little say. Very little say. You get a crab price that comes down from the federal government – they put out the quotas. The fishermen catch it and we collect the taxes. So that's what we're doing for the fishery. To me, that's incredible. We can't get our cod

fishery back. We can't figure out how we're going to do it.

The seals are a major issue in that problem, for sure, and we have yet to address it. I know it is tangly, there is no question about it; it is certainly an issue. But we have to get to it. It is never going to fix itself. We have to get in and put our foot down somewhere along the way. We let them dictate to us and it shouldn't be.

We have had all these resources, and you're not the government that gave it away, I'm aware of that, you're not the government that gave it away. You didn't give away the oil and you didn't give away the electricity and you didn't giveaway the fishery, but we have done it. The federal government is in control of everything we've got. And what say have we got sometimes? Very little. We have no say in the cod fishery. They're telling you exactly what the rules are and we have no say in it.

Back to the cost of living. I have a resident that emailed me, let's see if I can find it. She said: I know you're not a Member of the Liberal government, thank God, but as you're an MHA I would like to address the real rising fuel prices. Seniors in their homes, heated by furnaces, soon won't be able to afford to keep their homes. The cost to fill our tank is now over \$2,000 – and this email is a week and a half, two weeks old – less than two years ago it cost between \$800 and \$900. So where are the people getting the extra money?

You have the opportunity, you have the knowhow and you have everybody in the departments who knows how to do this. Let's give a break for three or four months. Let's give the people of the province a break so they can sit back and be able to enjoy their summer and when the fall comes, if the prices go down, so be it, then you can put it back on. But up until that point, we should be doing something right now so we can sit down and have a vote on something to help the people of the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you, Sir.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, Mr. Chair, it is always nice to stand in this House of Assembly and represent the District of Exploits, the people who put me here.

Chair, being home this weekend, I heard their voices again this weekend, I really did. It's the same wherever I go throughout the province; we're all hearing it certainly through our 40 districts.

People are in dire straits. There's no doubt people are in dire straits. When the phone keeps ringing, when you're talking to people in grocery stores, gas stations and your only topic is how do we get through it? What am I going to do? It's dire situations here. People are making choices today that are unheard of. They're making choices between whether they eat food or whether they stay warm. That's an incredible choice to make.

When I'm hearing people say I can't afford to buy the groceries anymore, especially when it comes to single parents, you know, buying milk or something for their children; single parents trying to provide for their children, trying to put some clothes on their backs, trying to put some shoes or sneakers on their feet so that they can go to school, so that they can go get an education, and we're hearing this every day.

We're not up here trying to degrade anyone and we're not making any personal attacks on anyone. We're just putting those issues forward because we hear them in our districts. I know you hear them in your districts. I really do. So there's nobody trying to make stabs at anybody. We need to find a solution, right now, today, to help the people of this province to make a better living for themselves right at this moment. This can't continue. It's not going to continue.

So while those people are making those kind of choices, which are unfortunate choices right now, so when people are making those choices, they're looking at me and saying: Here are your choices you've made. The Member from Ferryland just mentioned it; \$30 million to a company in the States to streamline health care. In the past two years, to streamline health care,

\$30 million went to the States. Rothschild, again, \$5 million to tell us what we own.

People are listening to this out there you know. People hear this; they see this. So \$5 million to Rothschild to tell us what we own so we can make evaluations on it. I'm sure we could have saved a bit of money there in those two instances.

Again, the Member for Ferryland mentioned the tough choice of putting an office in Grand Falls-Windsor for the Premier. Really tough choice so that he could have a voice in Central Newfoundland. I don't know how tough that gets, I really don't. So that's \$250,000 in initial set-up this year. So give that three years in there, you're looking at anywhere from \$750,000 to probably a million dollars for an office in the Central area while a child can't go to school because they have no shoes on their feet, or they can't buy milk for their child to go to school. And that's a tough choice?

I do believe that people do see this. When they see that money being spent like that and they're trying to put a drop of gas in their car. They're even making the choice of whether to go to work or not. I've even heard that, I've really heard that. Will I go to work? I can't afford to do it. Now that's a tough choice. That's a tough choice.

So the choice of putting that office in Grand Falls to spend that kind of money when people have to make those kinds of choices, it just doesn't add up, especially when we already elected seven MHAs in the Central area. We already elected them. There were seven of us that got elected in the last election to represent the people in Central: Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, an MHA down there; Baie Verte - Green Bay, an MHA there; Lewisporte - Twillingate; Fogo Island - Cape Freels; and Gander. That's five MHAs on the Liberal side. Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and Exploits, that's two more, two more MHAs on our side. Seven MHAs representing the Central area and the Premier could spend anywhere up to \$750,000 to a million in three years to support an office in Grand Falls-Windsor.

Big choices, tough choices, b'ys, tough choices. So I'm sorry, that's the way the people feel

about it. That's where their money is going when it should've gone back to finding a way to help the people in our province. Because they see it, they feel it. So when it comes to choices and helping out the people in my district, in our other districts, it's not happening. I don't call that a choice, I really don't. The only choice there is, is the choice that's taken away from the people of our province that we could've helped them out in some way. That's the choice that was made there.

The people of our province deserve better. As elected representatives – and I know there are seven elected in Central Newfoundland – we can certainly do better for the constituents in our region of Central Newfoundland. I don't need a voice to stand up here, another voice in Central, saying that the people are hurting right now, where to spend that money. That's an office that certainly should not have been there.

So we need to do better for our people. Right now, in Central Newfoundland, I am hearing a rebate. They need a rebate program. They need something that they can get back that they can spend into filling up their tanks with furnace oil. If they don't spend it in furnace oil, they can spend it on another program so that they can use gas in their car or, either that, they need some sort of a tax break.

They definitely need a tax break on the fuels that they are buying right now to either get from one destination to another. I have people in my area driving upwards to an hour, trying to get to work, to make ends meet. For the most part, they can't afford to drive that hour to make ends meet because by the time they get home, they get back, their cheque just doesn't cut it anymore. It just doesn't cut it. Their cheque doesn't cut it. The initiatives that the government put in in regard to funding in the budget that the minister gets up and talks about the \$142 million, that doesn't cut it either. That just doesn't cut it.

So we need to find a way and we need to find it now – we really do – to get those people assistance so that they can live better. We are just putting them in a bracket where they can't afford to live. Right now they are just surviving – barely surviving. We don't need people around here trying to survive day by day by day by day. We can try to have people live comfortably. We

really can. We can try to have people live comfortably and in a manner that they can get up in the morning and be able to drive to work, reasonably, like they did before and support their families, support their children, support things in their districts.

Mr. Chair, I never even got to the health part of it with regard to doctors and emergency units and that sort of stuff in Central Newfoundland that's in dire straits as well right now. So there are lots of things to look at. But when you are talking about tough choices, those were the tough choices that I'm hearing people coming back to me saying: B'y, if the government can spend money in places like that, then they can do something for us that would alleviate some of the stress off the taxes that we're paying right now on the fuels and the groceries. If government can make those choices, then they can make better choices of helping us do what we need to do.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The next recognize the hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

G. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I really want to say thank you to the two hon. Members that proceeded me, the Member for Ferryland and the Member for Exploits. They gave us some cogent points to be able to process and digest upon. I want to thank the hon. Member for Ferryland for providing us with a retrospective, a look back in time to an event which was transformative for Newfoundland and Labrador and that was, of course, the closure of the groundfish fishery 30 years ago. It will be 30 years ago on July 2, I believe, when former Minister John Crosbie formally shut down the groundfish fishery and we have not seen it return since.

One of the things that we all lamented at the time was that we failed to follow the advice, the credence of science and we suggested to each other with experienced voices that if we fail to follow the advice that's given, that we know in

our hearts that we must do, we will perpetuate disaster. 1992, of course, was the largest industrial layoff in the history of Canada, when the entire groundfish fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI and Quebec were placed in perpetual hold. They have not rebounded.

Mr. Chair, a lot of the conversation that occurs now today is a matter of science, is a matter of the environment; it is a matter of taking tough choices before those choices are imposed upon you. That really is the environmental paradigm that we're in when it comes to climate change. Do we take a loss, do we incur a penalty or do we accept that we must alter our standard of living or our ways and means of making a living to avoid an absolute collapse? I think that really, Chair, is the question that we face when it comes to climate change. This is an inevitability that if change is not effected, every element of our society, our economy, our political socio-economic well-being will be placed in jeopardy and to the point where the consequences may not be able to be effectively reversed.

So, Chair, we are today, hopefully, learning some of the lessons of the past, but as I listen to the debate it appears we may have forgotten. We may have forgotten that if we do not learn from the past, then we are doomed to repeat it. Mr. Chair, in some measure, some of the pain we feel today is a consequence of taking action to avoid something which will be absolutely catastrophic.

Nobody likes to incur additional costs. Nobody likes to have their normal ability to make a living or to enjoy recreational pursuits or anything else impeded upon. But of course this is not a free exercise, unfortunately; it's something that comes with a certain amount of discipline that is required.

Just as, had we taken action before 1992, had the federal government taken action before 1992, we would probably not have a groundfish closure or reduced groundfish catches as we see today. If action had been taken much more proactively, we would be at a very different spot.

I cannot help but think that when we look at the inflationary pressures, when we look at the dynamic that is around us in the entire world

whether it be the illegal and unethical, immoral invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the consequences that has had on the geopolitical landscape of all continents, of all six continents, we are left with not only inflationary pressures but we are impacted by reduced supply with strong demand, but reduced supply for petrochemicals which is driving costs up as well and we see that going down the supply chain.

So, Chair, as I reflect on what the hon. Member for Ferryland, as well as the Member for Exploits, had to say about the need for action, what we can report, what this House is very much aware of is that one of the largest support programs for any citizen in Canada comes from the people of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in an offset for something which is very unfortunate but inevitable.

Mr. Chair, I would love to be able to announce, our government would love to be able to announce, not through debt financing, but through cash flow, other initiatives, such as – and I'll just use this as a hypothetical. I'm sure all hon. Members of the House would love to participate in this. If we were to announce a \$100-million seniors' income top-up program, along with a \$100-million working family top-up program, along with a \$100-million children's support top-up program, coupled with a \$50-million student support initiative, coupled with a \$50-million municipal government support program, coupled with a \$50-million industry support program, coupled with a \$50-million service organization support program.

If we were to announce all of that: a \$100-million seniors' top-up, a \$100-million working family top-up, a \$100-million children's support program, a \$50-million student support program, a \$50-million municipal support program, a \$50-million industry support program and a \$50-million service organization support program, what we would be announcing, Chair, is the exact same amount of money that we have to spend on rate mitigation because of Muskrat Falls every year, year after year, year after year, year after year.

So we are investing money –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

G. BYRNE: – because we have no choice but to offset the incredibly catastrophic impacts of Muskrat Falls. No choice has been given.

We have to debt finance; we're a government that's been left with the highest debt financing of anywhere in the entire country. And we have chosen to offset the cost of Muskrat Falls through rate mitigation, which does cost us \$500 million a year. That is unavoidable.

Just as we speak of the fishery, just as the hon. Member for Ferryland speaks of the fishery, speaks of the past and the mistakes of the past, I, today in this House of Assembly, speak of the past, the mistakes of Muskrat Falls and the consequence that it's left us. We have less ability to deal with the circumstances of today, not because we have no interest, not because there is not empathy but because we have tied up resources –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

G. BYRNE: – significant resources in dealing with the misguided project that is called Muskrat Falls.

So as we speak truth to this entire scenario, Chair, our government has not only provided support to seniors, to families, to students, to children, to all those who we have supported and helped, and will continue to do so, whether it be through the Child Tax Benefit, through other initiatives or the family support benefits. We have supplied and we will continue to look for opportunities to be able to support working families, seniors, students, children, community organizations, municipalities and everyone who is a major and dominant force in our society. They all deserve support, but we can say honestly and speak the truth, we are providing \$500 million a year in an energy-offset program called rate mitigation from the catastrophic failure called the misguided project: Muskrat Falls.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand in this House and speak to Bill 49. Of course, this is a Supply bill, and as the Minister of Finance has said, basically, we're just allowing the continuation of government, to pay salaries, pay for all the government departments, offices and so on. We need to do this every year, obviously, so that people get paid and government functions.

Mr. Chair, this covers of course not just agencies, boards and commissions, not just core government departments but this also covers this House of Assembly. Within the jurisdiction of this House of Assembly, of course, we have the House here, the people's House, where we have to operate, of course, and we do so in a professional way, I think most of the time. And certainly it's critical that the House of Assembly and all aspects of it operate with integrity. Part of the House of Assembly, I guess, that part of what falls under the House of Assembly, we have a number of statutory offices.

We have the Office of the Auditor General, of course; we have the Citizens' Representative and the money from this would help fund that. We have the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, we have the Privacy Commissioner and we have the Seniors' Advocate, which we just announced a new Seniors' Advocate here today, the government did, and so on. They appointed a new Seniors' Advocate. So there are a number of these independent statutory offices and these offices and these officers all report to this House of Assembly. They don't report to a minister. They don't report to the government. They report to this House of Assembly. We are responsible to ensure that these offices are operating in a proper efficient way and that everything is being done properly with integrity and so on.

So with that said, Mr. Chair, I received a call over the weekend from a constituent of mine, it was a lady, she was a constituent of mine. This lady told me a very, very disturbing, upsetting story about a statutory office that reports to this House of Assembly, and she wants answers. She wants to know what's being done. I said to her:

Well, what is all this about? She told me – I'm going by what the lady told me – that we have a statutory office that reports to this House of Assembly, where apparently there have been several allegations of harassment, bullying, nepotism and a whole bunch of other things. I said: Well –

CHAIR: I ask the Member to please try to stay relevant to the spending policies as opposed to a commissioner who reports to the House.

Thank you.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I figured if we were talking about climate change, Muskrat Falls, everything else.

CHAIR: Again it was related to carbon tax, but I just ask you to try to steer on the spending policy of the Executive.

P. LANE: This is not the carbon tax, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Please, do not question the Chair. Just try to stay focused on spending policy.

Thank you.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Well, Mr. Chair, I would say the policy and the funding and so on, we are passing a bill here to fund, not just core government but to fund statutory offices of the House of Assembly that report to us. Just like any government department or agency, board and commission, we have to ensure that those departments are operating in an ethical manner and things are going properly, because the people are paying for those offices. They're paying for those salaries. I think it's very important to point out, for this House, to understand that this is a very serious allegation that's been brought forward.

I said: Is it just you? She said: 21 people. I said: 21 people? No way, 21 people. That's what she said. Twenty-one employees under the whistleblower act have made a complaint to the Office of the Citizens' Representative. I said: No way. When did that happen? She said: It happened quite some time ago and that's why I'm calling you. I said: Why? She said: Because

it was made quite some time ago. There's a report that has been completed. There are 10 recommendations for correction and nothing has happened. I said: Well, I haven't seen any report. She said: Well, it went to the House of Assembly almost two months ago. I said: No way. It cannot be. I checked with my colleagues on the Management Commission. They don't know anything about it.

I don't know, Mr. Char, if this report exists or not. I don't know. I haven't seen the report. This is what I have been told and I am not naming names. I am not naming what office this is, but I want to know, the people deserve to know and this House of Assembly deserves to know is there a report. Did this happen? Is there a report? And if there is a report, where is the report? How come it has not gone to the Management Commission? How come it is not tabled in this House of Assembly so that we can debate it before the House closes – before the House closes?

I don't know if the government Members are aware of this or not. I wasn't aware of it. I don't know if my colleagues here are aware of it. I don't know. But I would say to the government Members, I would say to the Premier, I would say to the Government House Leader, this is serious stuff, if this is true. I would like to see that report, if there is a report. You need to go find out if there is a report and see it and table it so we can have a debate in this House of Assembly about what's going on. If there is anything going on. I don't know if there is anything going on, but that's what I was told.

If it is true, it is very shocking and it is very, very concerning. We should all be concerned. The people should be concerned because it is the peoples' money that we are approving in this bill that is funding those offices. Not to mention the fact that if this is true – and this lady told me that there are people who quit their job and everything. Again, I don't know, that is what she said. People have quit their job. If that is true and we have a toxic workplace somewhere within government that reports to this House of Assembly, then I think we need to know about it. I think we need to know about it. We need to know what is going on and what it is all about.

I'm just going to leave that for now with the government but I really encourage the government to find out if this is true or not and, if so, bring it to the Management Commission ASAP and then let's get it to this House of Assembly, if there is anything to it, so that we can debate what is going on before the House closes. Because we certainly wouldn't want to wait for the House to close and then we would be into September or October or whatever it is before we get to debate it. We would want to know what is going on right now and we want to debate it right now, if there is anything to debate. But I put it out there that this is very important that we do that.

Now, with that said, I'm just going to take a couple of minutes just to sort of speak to the budget a little more.

Mr. Chair, as has been said in this House of Assembly numerous times by my colleagues, by myself, this is not about trying to beat up on government, it's really not. When we come here and we talk about the fact that there are people who can't afford to eat, there are people who can't afford fuel to heat their homes, there are seniors cutting their medications in half or taking them every second day. We're not making any of this stuff up. This is stuff that we're really hearing from people on a regular basis. It's very important that all Members understand it and I think they do.

I appreciate the \$142 million that the Minister of Finance keeps talking about that was put into the budget. I really do appreciate that, and it does help some people. No doubt it does help some people. But, again, as I've said many, many times, if you're a senior who has a little bit of a pension because you worked your whole life, or a few RRSPs, you have nothing. If you're someone who is working a minimum-wage job, and some people are working two minimum-wage jobs and so on, to try to make ends meet, it did nothing for them. And these people are hurting; they really are hurting. A lot of these people are living paycheque to paycheque and there's no break there for them.

So I want to, once again, encourage the government please try to find more mechanisms to help those people as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you to the Member.

I next recognize the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Chair.

It is a great opportunity to talk about this bill today on Supply, and I guess indirectly or directly it's the budget. I want to start off – because we always get what's in the budget – in my Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, I'd just like you to know – and I think everybody should take note of this – we actually invest \$250,000 into the Newfoundland school milk program. So that's pretty good. We put milk in all the schools in this province.

When we talk about milk, and dairy has come up in the last couple of days and farming is coming up and the increased costs, to know that we're able to provide milk – and I like to say brewed locally, but whatever it is – manufactured locally.

J. HAGGIE: Lactated locally.

D. BRAGG: Lactated locally. Thank you very much for that, it's from the doctor.

It is great; \$250,000 might not sound like much but it puts milk in all of the schools.

The SPCA is another program we invest in. We put \$110,000 to help out the SPCA so that is, basically, I think \$10,000 per SPCA throughout the province. They get a grant of \$10,000 from us every year because those people do invaluable work protecting a lot of animals that have been sort of left out in the cold.

The Community Garden Support Program is another one. You talk about sustainability: \$100,000 in the Community Garden Support Program, a great program. You see those raised beds in communities. It's a great opportunity for people to get out and to have a conversation and compare farming ability. At the end of the day, when the harvest is done, it's basically who's got the bigger pumpkin or who's got the bigger

potato or turnip. I know in the fall of the year – I'm on this farmers' group and some people come out with a head of cabbage that I wouldn't get in the pack of a pickup. It's amazing what people can grow and there is a real love for it.

One of the people that I visit from time to time in the community of Hare Bay grows his cabbage individually in buckets and every head of cabbage is perfect. It is a unique way – now I don't think you would have a big commercial farm because you would want so many buckets, but there is not even a brown spot on his cabbage. Every head there is ready for market. And to see what people do there in the backyard is wonderful.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, we give these guys a grant for \$75,000 – invaluable work that they do.

The Lumber Producers Association, another \$75,000.

Today alone, talking about Little Green Thumbs and Little Green Sprouts, \$305,000 into the classrooms for the kids, the very ones that you want to come up and fill the positions of the farmers. The kids in the classrooms are learning so much about how to grow a vegetable, grow what they like and harvest it and cook it. It's a great opportunity.

Many times when I go out to visit the farms and the fish plants as well, you will find a lot of older people and one of the main pushes for me is finding a way to get young people into the industry. We need the young people in the industry today and farming and the Little Green Thumbs is a great program to introduce people to the farming.

Last year, I was in the community of Deer Lake, it might even have been Cormack just up the Northern Peninsula a little bit, in which we had the school's out and the graduates who were coming out and wanted to get into farming and want the opportunity. That is what we need in this industry. That is what we need today. We need the young people to get involved to get out there.

There's no problem today to see it's difficult. There is increased cost of fuel and fertilizer, that's some real things and it is a real challenge.

Again, we're going to talk to our federal counterparts and our provincial counterparts to see if there is anything we can do to help these people because it is a time. But we need the vegetables; we need to be self-sufficient. Our goal this year was to be at 20 per cent. Now, most of that would have been in potato production. It would have pushed us up over where we needed to be, the threshold of our goal. But now, given the challenges today of fertilizer – I know seed potatoes are going at a premium; they're very cheap off the Island. I know a lot of our farmers are bringing them in, so that is one good thing this year. They're getting a good price on seed potatoes.

Then we have our transplant program that's at Wooddale; 4.5 million transplants that go out to the farmers. That is a commitment – if you ever get a chance to go to Wooddale, it will do you a world of good to go in there. Last year I had the opportunity to plant the 300-millionth seedling. So 300-million seedlings were grown and planted in this province out of that facility in Wooddale. Again, I know the hon. Member for Exploits; it must be the gem and the gleam in his eye when he goes to Wooddale because it is something that we are proud of in our department.

I guess I can't ignore the fishery right now; it is an important time in the fishery, I know everybody's anxiety level is at an all-time level, and the hon. Member for Ferryland talked about the fishery. I was lucky enough, actually, to live and still live in a fishing community. Since I have been there, we saw the moratorium; it was in '92. I saw the devastation to rural Newfoundland and what it caused. The Member opposite said it seemed like we haven't grown it back.

The fishermen I talk to say if the crab diminished, the cod will come back. That is not scientific; that is just the fishermen. But right now crab is king – it is not a king crab; it is a snow crab, but it is the main focus. I would say it is the main breadwinner now for that industry and, because of that, people can go to the other species. This year I know the price has settled on

cod. For years, we've been saying that if cod could only be \$1 a pound, it would be worth our while; it would be feasible to go out there.

This year cod is over \$1 a pound, not by much but it is a little over \$1 a pound. For a lot of fisherpeople, that puts it in an area where it is now feasible for these guys and these ladies to go after. Last year, we caught less than 75 per cent of the cod quota, so we left millions of pounds of cod in the water. Millions of pounds of cod that could have been produced in the province in our fish plants and distributed around the world.

Newfoundland was born on the cod fishery and it is sad that it is not our main staple right now – that is the crab. But it'd be great when the cod comes back. But my fear, as the fishermen's fear would be, the cod would come back, the crab would diminish. So we need a healthy balance. And we are challenged by our federal decisions when it comes to the science and the setting up of quotas.

But as a province we don't have the resources. We would never have the money that the federal government has that they can put into science. They have two ships right now. I know there are some issues with the ships. They have two ships that they use for the research vessels. So we need their knowledge. We need Ottawa to be very, very concerned and cognizant of where we need to be in this province. We need our rural communities to survive. The rural communities in this province, the coastal ones, depend so much on the fishery that's it not something we can take lightly; it's not something we can overexploit. It's something we need to manage and we need to keep people in the fishery.

Again, the fishery comes down to I'm worried about younger people, the cost of going into it. I'm told to transfer off a licence now, if a licence is worth 10,000 pounds, the sale on that now is \$420,000. Like, that is a figure that my grandfather would've fainted at, that today is real for anybody in this industry.

I know I don't have a lot of time left and I want to talk about my district, but I'll put in a great plug and thank the great people from Fogo Island - Cape Freels for giving me the opportunity to be here. And it's not all as bad as

one would think. But it isn't easy. I heard one time heavy is the head that wears the crown, there's no doubt about that. Everybody is faced with decisions, decisions that affect this province, and we're going to do the best we can to run this province in the best possible way we can.

I'm just so happy – there's a minute left. I have to put in a little plug for Muskrat Falls, because it gets the temperature up on the other side of the room. I'm just watching the Member for Ferryland because he turns from white to red when someone mentions Muskrat Falls. So I'm going to stop on that, but I just had to get that in.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes the hon. Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to speak again on Supply. First of all, I want to thank the minister who just spoke. He helped me out with something and his department – Mr. Blair Adams, actually, and a tourism operation that wouldn't be able to go. He made it work. So I just want to thank him very much for his taking the time, take me aside and working with me on that so this tourism operator in my district can be successful. So thank you very much for that.

Mr. Chair, we've heard it so far quite a bit today about the Premier's office that's opened up in Grand Falls-Windsor. The overwhelming majority of the population do not agree with it because the government says that they're strapped for cash. Well, it comes down to choices. And we'll be talking about those choices much more in the future.

Choices could have been made. The Finance Minister signed off on the choices that have been made. So when it sounds like we're going to bring this up constantly, we bring it up because the choices that could've been made differently could've really impacted some lives. And I'm going to tell you why.

Over the past year, myself and my CA have been fighting like dogs to get a mom of two in my district, 40-year-old mom of two who has cancer. We were trying to get her a cancer treatment drug. We applied and applied and fought and fought and fought. The response that we go back – and I'm going to read it verbatim, if you'll bear with me: The Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program has processed your application under the Assurance Program. Unfortunately, you do not qualify for coverage because your eligible drug costs based on assessment of the information provided is below the percentage threshold of your income allowable under the program.

Basically, they said that the province can't afford it. The province can't afford to give this mom of two, five-year-old and seven-year-old kids, the cancer drug that could have potentially helped her and saved her life. She died Saturday night. She passed away Saturday night leaving a five- and seven-year-old. This is not about blame; these are the facts. The facts of the matter are there's an office going in to Grand Falls-Windsor so the Premier can have the presence he wishes. What is it costing the rest of the province? Well, we see here what it just cost one family, don't we? Maybe that money could've been spent elsewhere. Yeah, it's raw, but it's real. These are the faces that we see.

Do you want to know what choices could've been made differently? That's a choice that could've been made differently. Unfortunately it wasn't.

So we have the mayor down in Bishop's Falls and he supports the office. We have a deputy mayor down in Grand Falls-Windsor and he supports the office. Shame on anybody that supports this office over giving help to other people of the province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – just so the Premier can have himself a presence.

What other choices could have been made? We have the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor, and some money did come from government and we are very appreciative of that. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough. There could

have been more. We have some great people on the ground raising money right now.

By the way, the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor you visit, that wasn't built by government. My grandfather paid taxes and paid an allowance every single month way back in the '50s and '60s so that hospital could have been built. Thank God they did.

Now the people in Grand Falls-Windsor, they have another committee made so the Lionel Kelland Hospice, our first community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador – we are the only province without one – can be built, can be made. So people can have some dignity when they pass on. And this is passed on to the citizens to raise the money themselves and we are going to do it. We are going to do it thanks to some hard-working people on the ground in Grand Falls-Windsor. God bless them all. We are going to get it done and we are really, really happy about that.

So you take, I don't know – the number has been thrown around – a quarter of a million dollars over three or four years. You know that is going to be a lowball number. It is. What else could that have bought?

Well, we see that our Fire and Emergency Services was cut from \$2.7 million down to \$1.8 million. So now we are telling firefighters across the province that sorry we can't afford it. We don't have enough. It could be lifesaving equipment, PPE, fire trucks, hoses. That is what is being used to save people's lives on a daily basis – cut \$900,000.

Choices: maybe that choice could have been made. Maybe, instead of opening a Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor, we could have taken that money and put it in the Fire and Emergency Services so all of those communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, when you are going to be told no soon – and this is not blaming the Minister of Justice and Public Safety because his hands are tied. He has only got so much to work with and I realize that. But when the communities across this province are going to be told: Sorry, there's not enough in the budget. Maybe some money from the Premier's office could have been sent out to Buchans to

get their new fire truck that they needed or anywhere else.

So you can't sit there and say we have done everything we can because you didn't. You truly didn't. Somebody should have looked at the Premier at the time and said: Sorry, pal, we are not going to open up an office for you in Grand Falls-Windsor. You want to have a presence in Grand Falls-Windsor, come visit the place. Come on over, I will have a chat with you. We can sit down all day long and I will chat with you about exactly what happens in the Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District and around Central. And then we can get somewhere. You do not need an office there to have a presence and employ your friends.

So we do have choices. It is not just about fiscal responsibility; it is about the choices that government have made. We might think that it is a small amount but I have just outlined right there where that money could have gone instead of a Premier's office in Central Newfoundland and Labrador, which hasn't been there since I have been there. But apparently there needs to be a presence today. Why? Why does there need to be a presence today? Because we have two PC Members? Because we have a federal Conservative Member there? Why do we need it there today?

Maybe it is. We didn't need it there last year. We didn't need it the year before that. Why? It makes you think, doesn't it? Unreal. That money could have went towards roadwork. The Buchans Highway is all tore up still. We would love to have it for up there. Lots of places around Newfoundland and Labrador that could have used it. Unfortunately, it is already allotted. For what? For a Premier's office, which he may never see, who knows.

I mentioned last week about some ditching around Indian Point. The people of Millertown there, they have worked very hard to ensure that our Indigenous history is kept up; it's being recognized and supported by so many people across the province. And we had the minister come out with her officials; I don't know how much that cost, but they came out for their consultations, and nothing changed in the meantime, but that is okay. When they were out

there though, the talked about how important our Indigenous heritage is to us.

Three years straight we have been applying for ditching out there, before it washes Indian Point completely away. It is almost gone. We have applied again this year. I truly hope we get it. If not, this could be the last year we see Indian Point, where the minister had said: It is beautiful down here.

This is where they made their stand. This is where they had their mamateeks. This is a huge part of our Indigenous history and all we're asking for is a small amount of money to get ditching done so that history doesn't get washed away. What do we get? Nope, sorry, can't afford it. Can't afford it. Where is the money gone? The Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor.

So what do we tell people? What are these choices? Indian Point is gone. You've never been there. You should come out some time and check it out. I encourage everybody to come out and check it out. Indian Point is almost gone. Unreal, actually, unreal.

So I am proud of our Indigenous history, the Beothuk Indigenous history. I am proud to say that they were here. They made their stand and it's a people that we should be proud of. Unfortunately, Indian Point will be washed away in time.

So when we talk about this budget that came down, and again government says we can only give so much. There is not much more in the pot. There was more in the pot. There was more in the pot, but instead of giving it to this 40-year-old mom of two, instead of giving it to the Fire and Emergency Services, you gave it to the Premier so he could have an office and boast himself up just that little bit more.

Shame on anybody who supports this office. That money could have gone to much greater things for this province.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

I next recognize the hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I rise in this hon. House again today to represent the wonderful people of Placentia West - Bellevue that have given me the opportunity to come to this hon. House and speak on their behalf.

When we talk to a Supply bill, it's a money bill. We have to understand that. As my colleagues here have all mentioned, we have choices to make. But when we hear a senior Cabinet minister stand and talk about a 53-year-old project or talk about a seven-year-old project being misguided and really the issue with the project was that it was mismanaged once it was taken over by a new administration. That's the stuff that needs to be brought forward and mentioned because I think that if we had have a fair deal on the Churchill Falls deal some 53 years ago, then I think there would be a whole different mindset in this House in that Muskrat Falls would have certainly been paid for and wouldn't have had to cost –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

J. DWYER: – the people of the province the money that we are talking about.

But in the meantime, that is the way the world is going into this green economy and it's beneficial to, not only Newfoundland and Labrador but to the whole country. And notwithstanding that, it gives us an opportunity to further our assets in the reproduction of this green economy and green energy.

So, like I said, the issue really comes down to cost versus investments. We can't look at some of these things like health care; we can't look at them as a cost. We have to look at them as an investment. If we can say that spending \$600,000 on NASCAR shows us a return, then we can't be so disgruntled about the return that we are eventually going to get on the project that is being done now in Muskrat Falls.

Like I said, we hear all these reports. We hear of showing us what our assets are, realigning our health care system, all this kind of stuff, but not once in any of these reports have I heard how we are going to improve our economy. That needs to be our focus. If we get our people working, we are not having these conversations, and we're not worrying about global pressures and what's going on in the rest of the country. We are purveyors then of our own wealth and we are in control of what our province can and cannot do.

So at some point in time I would like to see this administration tackle the economy and see how we can improve people's lives by putting them back to work. People are not working right now. They're hurting. So like I said, when you talk about \$142 million going to people in the province to alleviate some of the cost-of-living pressures, then I would ask the government: Out of that \$142 million, how many people, seniors or people with disabilities, have gone over the threshold now of not being eligible for a drug card or for other programming that they're already eligible for because of this very miniscule stipend that might've put them over that threshold? Is that being counted toward their income?

Like I said, when you take people and you push them out of their eligibility threshold, then those are choices. That's what needs to be really focused on here. As you've heard from this side of the House, when you have a senior that's debating between home heat and groceries or prescriptions, and dividing their prescriptions into what they feel might get them over the hump, it's a whole different story. These are not conversations that our seniors should be having. These are the people that blazed a trail for us to even be in this House; therefore, they certainly – and I mean unequivocally – deserve our respect in trying to give them an opportunity to peacefully enjoy the province that they've built. That's the bottom line. Let's give them an opportunity to enjoy their retirement.

One of the things that I've proposed, and we talked about over the last couple of years, are the advocates. I think that they're very important, as does the minister. For the simple fact it gives people that confidence to know that when they go to these offices that we all work closely with,

the person that's hearing their concerns actually is a professional in the field. They understand these concerns, they understand the legislation and they understand how to give the proper advice per file, as opposed to a blanketed piece of advice for everybody. Like I said, when it comes down to it, it is about peaceful enjoyment.

I tell you what the seniors and the people with disabilities and children are not enjoying right now that we're spending a lot of money on, some of these green initiatives. Not that we disagree with them over on this side – we know we are heading to a green economy – but it is about transition. It is not about a cut-off and start. There is no end point to what we're doing now because a lot of these green initiatives are using oil and gas to have their infrastructure in place.

One of the things is charging stations. I don't disagree that the infrastructure needs to be there to attract people to that market, but when you're setting up and you're talking about over 200 charging stations in the province and you're talking about anywhere between 350 to 500 cars, it just seems to be a little out of whack for me. If we know anything about being pioneers in an industry, the equipment, or these charging stations in particular, are going to become obsolete before we see an uptake on the majority of the citizens of the province using it.

It is all okay for the pioneers; I got no problem with it, Mr. Chair, as you are a big proponent of pushing that. But the thing is that a lot of the components, whether it is lubrication or paint or anything like this, are all produced through oil and gas. Like I said, we need to transition as opposed to turning off the lights on one initiative and turning on the lights on another initiative. That's not how this is going to work. Like I said, transitioning would make it a lot more economical for everybody in the province and everybody in the country.

With the last couple of minutes I would like to touch on the fact that just recently the federal minister came out and acknowledged that there are seals in our water. I appreciate that. We've been saying it for years. As my learned friend from the great District of Bonavista would say, seal predation is something that needs to be

addressed ASAP. It looks like we have a federal minister now that is willing to take that on. Because when we look at the ground fishery – and we just talked about the ground fishery throughout the day being shut down with no sign of being reopened for 30 years – then we have to take into account a lot of people talking about science, but where is the initiative to take on the science that’s already been produced about seal predation. Because right now we see that our whole groundfish industry is somewhere around 200,000 metric tons. From my understanding, seals are currently, every seven days, eating almost 600,000 tons. So every seven days they are taking a whole year of our fishery away from us.

So for me it’s about balance and it’s about understanding what the real issue is. Like I said, it’s not about pitting communities against each other, because obviously every community wants their people working. That’s where I started this conversation or this address in this debate today. You can do all the studies you want, but until you address the economy, nothing is going to happen.

We’re going to stay in the same spot we are today as we were yesterday, as we were the year before that and the year before that. Right now, we need to address the economy, the fishery, oil and gas, our green initiatives, everything to do with technology. We need to do it right here, instead of farming it out to other people and other sources that we can do right here.

As you’ve heard a couple of my colleagues say earlier, I’m sure that we could have found somebody in Newfoundland and Labrador for \$5 million US to figure out what our assets are. Because guess what, we all have to report our assets every year, and every office has to do that. That doesn’t seem to me like it would cost \$5 million to do.

Like I said, the one thing that we need to address right now is the cost of living and the taxation that’s being imposed on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

I next recognize the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to this this afternoon. I know throughout the day and the last couple of weeks we’ve been in the House we’ve certainly been talking about the cost of living. We’ve been listening to what everybody in the House has been saying about the cost of living. We hear it from the other side, we hear it as we discuss it amongst our own colleagues and we certainly hear it as we talk to people in our districts as well. Nice sober conversations about this are the best way to deal with the issue.

Certainly we are, as a government, trying to come up with the best possible solutions we can as we work through this problem here, which is not just a problem in Newfoundland and Labrador, not just a problem, certainly, in Atlantic Canada, or Canada, it’s a worldwide problem. I tell you what, if anyone had figured out the solution right now, everyone would be copying it and we wouldn’t be debating this anymore. But the thing is it’s a very difficult problem with a lot of moving parts. This government is doing what it can right now to try and put more money back in the pockets of people who are facing this issue.

It’s not just my constituents, I realize, it’s everyone’s constituents. It is a problem that we are trying to address and will continue to address, because this government is not a short-term government. We have four years to work through all kinds of problems and there are problems that come up that we don’t expect to come up.

That is the role of government. We have to be flexible. We have to listen. We have to see what the issues are and when we do our budgets each year, we have to address the problems that come forward at that time. It is not a matter of just coming up with magic answers and talking about pouring more money at it, pouring more money at it. That doesn’t work either.

So we do have to work within our fiscal envelope. Fiscal envelope is a word I never heard before, but it seems to be used a lot now. We have to work within our fiscal envelope. I

am not in control of the envelope, but I do appreciate the person and all of the hard work who is in charge of the envelope. I think she does a very good job of dividing what is in the envelope among all of the departments of government to ensure that it is spread throughout government to get to everyone in the province, whether they are dealing with issues in Justice and Public Safety, dealing with issues in Industry, Energy and Technology, Digital Government and Service NL, Environment, et cetera, et cetera.

Certainly environment is something we have talked about a lot here in the last couple of weeks. We have talked about what is called the carbon tax, which I would say, again, is not what the federal legislation is called. The federal legislation is put in place to deal with a climate crisis that we are all facing. Again, not a local problem, not a Canadian problem, a worldwide problem. And that is one way the federal government has chosen to try and address that problem so we don't have a disaster for our next generation and future generations as well.

I know the Member for Lake Melville, all the time, he talks about we need to think about seven generations into the future. I think that is what climate change is. It is certainly something that we do need to think about in the very, very, very long term. Again, not something that we are going fix today or tomorrow. Not something we are going to solve within the four-year mandate of this administration, but I was just talking to my colleague here, the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, and we were hearing some comments on the other side about now is not the time to deal with these issues. I understand that.

We are putting some money into environment and climate change issues right now. I understand that maybe that money certainly could go to other places and I understand the needs and the concerns and the questions about that money going to other places, but imagine in 20 years now when the whole country is moved ahead with environmental projects, green projects, and we are behind again. We are 20 years behind where we should be. Then where will we stand?

People will say: Why didn't they, back in 2022, do the things, lay the groundwork for the environmental change that is happening for the green economy that is happening? Why didn't they do that 20 years ago? Why were they so short sighted? And you know what? I don't want to be part of a government that is short sighted. I want to be part of a government that is looking towards the future and laying the groundwork now.

It is easy to fix problems right now when you just throw money at it, but we all know throwing money at problems doesn't work. It is just not going to solve any of these problems. You need to have creative, long-term thinking and I think Members on this side it is the approach that they are taking. It is long-term sustainability for this province and that is very, very important.

What we can do, though, is to try to do some short-term things as well. Certainly, it is not just long term that we need to look at. Last week, we had some legislation in the House that will attempt to address some short-term problems here with regard to oil prices or gas prices here in the province. The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL introduced some forward-thinking amendments to address any issues with regard to – I don't like to use the word transparency – visibility into what the Public Utilities Board is doing with regard to when they set the maximum gas prices. We don't have all that information; 30-odd years ago when the legislation was drafted, perhaps they didn't foresee the issues that we have right now with regard to gas prices.

I commend the minister for introducing that new legislation, which will allow the public to see exactly what is going on when the Public Utilities Board sets its prices. The minister can then direct a public hearing into how those prices are set and then we'll have a big overall, really transparent view into what is happening at the Public Utilities Board with regard to those prices being set.

Again, the minister did say as well today, and I think it is an important point to make, is the Public Utilities Board doesn't set gas prices here in the province. So it is not a blame game on the Public Utilities Board, but what Public Utilities Board does is set the maximum price allowable.

So if we didn't have that, imagine, we could have prices \$3, \$4, \$5 for a litre. They are setting a maximum price based on their analysis that they're doing, which we will have more details of when this legislation passes. So retailers certainly are allowed to, if they can, if they see fit, if they feel like it is financially possible for them and their businesses to have lower prices than the maximum prices set by the Public Utilities Board.

Chair, I guess that is my little few minutes on the topics of the day with regard to cost of living and gas prices. I did want to talk a little bit about some ongoing things in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, because I did say that I do appreciate the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. She mentioned it here today as well. That a lot of money has been invested in the Department of Justice and Public Safety and, more particularly, in the Public Safety part of the department.

Again, I think that goes to forward thinking, making sure that we have the right entities in place, the right people in place, the right structure in place with regard to the public safety in this province. Again, I think that goes to forward thinking. You look back on the Burton Winters tragic situation that happened in Labrador, several years ago now, and the inquiry that was conducted into that tragic event was meant to bring forward recommendations and put those recommendations into works so that it wouldn't happen again.

So we wouldn't have to throw money at a problem when another child in Labrador, perhaps, goes missing or another snowmobiler goes missing in Labrador, which happens, unfortunately, much too often. We need to have the ability to do search and rescue in the province and particularly in Labrador. We need to have the right processes in place, the right infrastructure in place, the right staff in place to do that. Despite the tragic reason that the inquiry was called, I'm very happy that recommendations came out of that to allow us to build that search and rescue team throughout the province and particularly in Labrador.

Just some of the numbers to talk about today, because I have heard that we don't talk about the budget, but I'm very proud to talk about this part

of the budget. Government has committed almost \$2 million to the Newfoundland & Labrador Search & Rescue Association to implement the inquiries from Judge Igloliorte that came of the inquiry. That is a lot of money for a group that perhaps has been looking for a lot of money for a long time. They currently get about \$190,000 in annual funding. So to see a \$1.8-million contribution to the Search & Rescue Association in Newfoundland and Labrador to provide equipment and training in Labrador to deal with these issues as they happen unfortunately as we continue to move forward.

Another big portion of funding that came to the Department of Justice and Public Safety, as everyone knows, is for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Their budget was increased annually by \$17 million, Chair. And that funding will go to numerous things, including the current provincial police services agreement, and it does follow a decade of no increase in base fund.

Certainly in my short time as Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I've heard from a lot of mayors of rural municipalities, rural communities in this province who have come to me about concerns they have with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. And not concerns with the members that are currently in their towns, in their districts. Obviously they're very happy with the work they're doing, but just concerns that the funding is not being applied appropriately or there's not enough funding for these communities. They want to see members in their communities, they want these members to be part of their communities and they don't want rotating members who they don't know. I think we all know that the more familiar these faces are, the more of an impact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police can have on our communities.

I'm very happy to say I met last week with Newfoundlander and Labrador's new assistance commissioner, Jennifer Ebert. She's the first female assistant commissioner here in Newfoundland and Labrador. And she has a great vision for policing in Newfoundland and Labrador and she has a lot of experience with Indigenous communities. She spent time in Saskatchewan – a lot of time in Saskatchewan –

and she talked about the violence that she saw in Indigenous communities there. We had a long conversation about policing in these communities. Again, she spoke about long-term planning as well. She said it's not an issue that we can solve overnight. She said it's more of a 15- to 20-year plan.

Again, it goes back to the cost of living issues, the environmental issues as well. We do need long-term planning. Long-term planning is going to get us to where we want to be. And this government might not get the credit in the next few years, and that's fine with me. But when I look back on these 20-25 years, I'll know I had a small part to play in a long-term plan in sustainability in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes the Member for the District of Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, as a young soldier – you guys may find this hard to believe – I had lots of questions, very inquisitive and probably talked a little bit too much. And I remember really early in my career I got marched into the sergeant major's office and he looked me in the eyes and he said: What do you see in this room, Parrott? And I said: Well, there are some books and different stuff. And he said: What about on the wall? He had a big beautiful speckled trout and he said: I caught that in Labrador. You're from Labrador aren't you? I said: I am. Yeah. And he said: Do you know what you and that fish got in common? I said: What's that? He said: If the fish had kept its mouth shut it wouldn't be in this office, nor would you.

But it was at that moment in my life that I understood that sometimes you have to listen to understand, not to reply. And I think sometimes in this House we all listen to reply and not understand. When we stand up and talk about our constituents I have zero doubt that everybody in this House is getting the same phone calls. I really don't and I know we banter back and forth, but getting the calls and listening

doesn't mean that we are invoking the change that people need.

Now, I get the fact that people are concerned about the future and we ought to be concerned about the future. But we really, really, really need to understand what is happening in this province right now.

There is an old adage that says: There is only two days of the year when nothing can be done. One of them is yesterday and the other one is tomorrow. And what the people of Newfoundland need is for us to act today – today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We have made some modest steps. There's no question. We have made some modest steps and I'm not going to say government isn't trying because I know they are, but the reality of it is, is that doesn't put milk in people's fridges, it doesn't put food on their tables, it doesn't put gas in their cars and it doesn't allow some people to go to work. And it's a very, very true statement when people are saying people are deciding between staying home and going to work. I'm certain that everybody has gotten those calls. I have certainly gotten hundreds of those calls.

When we left the House Thursday and we all went back to our constituencies, Friday it was shocking to me and it is really the first time – and I will say for most people of the new Members in this House, three years ago today was our first election in 2019. It has been a steep learning curve over the last three years. The one thing I have learned, though, is to keep my ear to the ground and listen to my constituents because they are the ones who understand what is really going on.

So as I walked into Walmart I had a gentleman come over to me and he said: This isn't the place but what in the hell are you guys doing? And he started about gas. So you try and explain to him, as the Justice Minister just explained, the difference between the PUB and government and what can happen and how gas prices are set. But they don't care and nor should they. What they care about is when they go home, whether or not their child can play sports; whether or not

there is food on the table; whether or not they can afford to pay their hydro bill or any other bill they got; whether they can keep their car or their house. That is the reality of what is going on out there and it is a reality that I think is a little bit lost on this House sometimes and people need us to act today.

Nobody is saying that we should sacrifice the future for today. Not one person in this House believes that to be true. Not one person in this House would want it to happen. But what people do want is the ability to live today, so they know that they can see tomorrow. We have people, right now, who are very afraid of what tomorrow brings, every single day.

We all know what that causes. We could look at the Health Accord and one of the Health Accords main things was social determinants is people's ability to living comfortably with finances.

So government can sit here and say this is federal taxes and a global pandemic and it's affecting Atlantic Canada and it's affecting – I'll tell you what, it may be affecting Atlantic Canada, but Nova Scotia pays, I believe, right now, 24 cents a litre less than us. They're just right there. There fuel is coming from the same place – 24 cents a litre. So there has to be options and maybe the option isn't gas. Maybe we need to look at alternate things; maybe we need to look at taxation on electricity; maybe we need to look at rebates. There are things that can be done. There are levers that can be pulled.

I'll say this, the one thing that irks me more than anything – I understand government's stance on Muskrat Falls, but the reality of Muskrat Falls is that it was supposed to be commissioned in 2017. It is 2022 and it is still not commissioned. So there is blame on both sides of this aisle. Obviously, it was ill conceived but it has been ill managed.

To hear the Member over there today talk about Muskrat Falls and the \$500-million bill. Since Churchill Falls came online, it is projected that the Quebec government has received \$80 billion in revenue. It is also suspected that by 2041, they would have received \$150 billion.

So we sit here and we talk about the ill-conceived Muskrat project, which is yesterday, folks. It is not today, it is not tomorrow; it was yesterday. It is the same history as Churchill Falls. We can go back on yesterday every single day. But I can tell you the people that put us here and they want us to start thinking about today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We understand that there is a requirement to plan for tomorrow and we understand the fiscal situation that this province is in, but I can tell you our fiscal situation that we are in right now won't mean a row of beans to people who lose their houses, cars, their lives, their livelihoods today. And it is happening. It is happening and if there's a Member in this House who can stand up and say they haven't received a call from someone or haven't received an email or haven't received a message on Facebook talking about the dire strait we are in, I challenge anyone to stand up and say it because they quite simply can't.

Newfoundlanders, right now, have choices to make and so does this government. So the choices that Newfoundlanders are making is whether or not they are going to turn their heat up on 20 or they are going to get a blanket. It's whether or not they are going to eat healthy food or buy junk food. It's whether or not they are going to put gas in their car to get to the grocery store or to work or they are going to try and walk. It's whether or not they can afford to go to the hospital. That's their choices.

Our choices are quite simple, much simpler than the choices that everyday people have to make. Our choices are to sit down, get our thinking hats on and find a way out of the hole we are in and give people some relief because that is all people are asking for. Nobody is asking for the farm. People are asking for a little tiny bit of help. If we sit here and we think that the people in this province don't understand the mess we are in, we are equally as wrong because they do.

The people who come to me saying they need help, they say we understand the fiscal situation the province is in but what we don't understand is how we sacrifice today for 20 years down the

road because I hear the Members opposite talk about our grandchildren's future all of the time.

Well, I tell you, the people that built this province, our grandparents, our parents, they deserve a present right now. They deserve to be able to live with dignity and they deserve to be able to do what they want to do. They have worked hard. They have sacrificed and they have sacrificed so we can sit in this House. We are here sitting today on their behest. Be it people who fought in the war, people who voted for Confederation, it doesn't matter what political stripe you are. The people that came before us, that built the fishery, the forestry, the natural resource sector, technology, all the things that are thriving right now, those people deserve a certain amount of dignity today.

We can't change what happened yesterday and, to be quite frank, the only thing we can change about what happened yesterday is we can change how we talk about it, because the reality of it is that talking about the \$500 million or Muskrat Falls doesn't solve anything. It doesn't solve one thing. We can talk about Churchill Falls all day long, no different. We can talk about equalization in Quebec, no different. We can talk about what is happening in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Nova Scotia and PEI, no different. But guess what? Nobody outside of this room cares. They care about what is happening right here in Newfoundland and Labrador and so should we.

So I'm not denying the fact that there's a war in Ukraine; I'm not saying that there isn't a global crisis with oil and gas; I'm not saying that everything isn't driven partially because of COVID and other factors. What I am saying is that we need to stop making excuses for what's happening in the world and start looking at what's happening right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. People need help, plain and simple. And we can do it. We can give them help in the simplest ways. They're not asking for long-term elimination of programs; they're asking for a short-term fix to get through this difficult time.

This province, this government, has the ability to do it. And they ought to be applying pressure on the federal government in order to step up and do their portion. The federal government should immediately suspend the carbon tax. Nobody is

saying sacrifice a green future for the carbon tax. People are saying suspend it for now. Just to give people some relief, a little bit of relief. The problem is, with fuel prices, is that fuel prices drive every single thing that we do – everything. From the clothes we wear to the food we eat to our trips, to the hospital to the wages we pay.

So, Mr. Chair, I'm saying that government needs to step up and live in today. Forget about yesterday; think about tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

Interesting debate going on. When I find the conversation in this Legislature goes to the place that it has today and last week, I find myself reflecting a lot to my time in Opposition. I remember back in those early years of '13, '14, '15 and it was our job to get up and identify all these issues and bring forward every shortcoming that there was. Then you sit on this side, and it's certainly a much more challenging seat to sit in. I will say that, as someone who's sat on that side, as someone who's spent 20 months looking at the view of the Legislature from down there, as Deputy Speaker, and now sitting in government, it's a responsible chair.

I want to start with, a lot of times, Members across the way – hon. Members, and I'm not meaning any disrespect to anybody, Chair – they talk as if we don't care. It's cold, it's callous and if you cared. And I want to say, as someone who's had the tremendous privilege of representing a district for almost a decade, and representing the people of the province as a Cabinet minister for half a decade, you wouldn't be in these seats very long if you didn't care about the people.

When folks across the way ask us, are we getting the calls; you must be getting the calls to. We absolutely are getting the calls, Chair. There are not many weekends that I am in town, but when I am, I still not sitting idly at home. Like

yesterday, I happened to be in town on a Sunday, and that's usually the time that I will take to see what constituents that I have that are here in town in one of the hospitals. I couldn't visit them for a while with COVID and now we're able to go back. Sunday afternoon, I was at the Health Sciences for a number of hours yesterday visiting folks, listening to them, talking about their concerns, talking about the cost of living, talking about the war in Ukraine, the supply chain and what's driving all of this.

I just want to say I think everybody in this Legislature, if you represent a district – and I will say I was in the district of Member for Topsail - Paradise. I went bowling on the weekend, something I hadn't done in a long, long time, and I saw your sign. I said there's where he hangs his hat and represents his people.

It truly is humbling, the majority of people vote and we represent. I think that all of us that have a district, we work really hard representing that district and we care about the people that we represent. We try and always be responsive. The lines are very blurred. It's definitely not a Monday to Friday, 9 to 5. If you have a rural district, it's probably like a 24-7. I never, ever turn my phone off. It can ring at 1 in the morning if it's an air ambulance scenario. It can ring at 6:40 in the morning if there's a ferry that didn't move because of ice. I think I was maybe out of range in the last nine years on my phone for two days, and that's once when I couldn't get an Internet package and I was away. I hope that speaks to my constituents, too, the responsibility that I feel I have in representing them.

I have to toss a bouquet to my colleague, the Minister of Finance. Sometimes I feel I work long days because I do my constituency work here at night, but there were weeks and weeks and weeks when I left that her vehicle was still here, as she was trying to flesh through and make some really challenging decisions. We were looking at options around the table. We are, no doubt, in a very difficult spot, but we will get through this. We've gotten through hard times in the past.

I just want to mention with the time that I have, Chair, some of the things in the budget that I was pleased with. When I look through a rural

lens, I think about search and rescue, and it was already mentioned here today. We have a long, long coastline from Nain in the North, right down to L'Anse au Clair. We have some sad stories. I was in municipal politics at the time we had the Burton Winters tragedy, and those people that were sitting around tables at that time, that experience will stay with us always. The report came in with the 17 recommendations in December. I was pleased as a government that their annual support, less than \$200,000, and this year they got almost \$2 million. I have no doubt that Harry Blackmore and his team will put that to very good use.

Yes, Chair, lots of challenges around health; MHAs, we're getting the calls. We have Dr. Sean Connors. We have all been watching him. He comes on the evening news for a while talking about one in three people in our province will experience a heart problem. So sitting out in the foyer just last Thursday, I believe it was, and to see that the Premier and the Minister of Health had signed this agreement with the Ottawa Heart Institute where two things will happen: Folks that need immediate surgery that maybe can't get it here will go to Ottawa, or maybe surgeons from Ottawa will come down here. It was encouraging for me and it was encouraging for constituents that I represent that have issues and are waiting.

The dental agreement that was just signed, and we all get calls on that, Chair. Also the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, \$10 million in this budget – to be honest, those of us that are rural MHAs probably wish it was triple that. There is tremendous need, yet in this fiscal climate, \$10 million was set aside so that folks who have to travel to places like St. John's for specialist appointments that they cannot get in their area, here is a program to help offset the cost.

Chair, when I think about right now where we are in this sitting, folks are saying do something now – do something now. When you look at our budget and almost \$1 billion in debt servicing, I always take it down to in very finite, simple terms to my credit card. If I was paying more in interest on my credit card than paying down the debt, I wouldn't be making very much progress on that.

When I think about, Chair, the \$500 million that we have to set aside to mitigate the rates: \$2,400 a month, I believe it is, per household that is being set aside there to help the people in this province. Even in this very challenging time, Chair, having a vision to pay down the debt servicing so instead of just throwing that money away, just burning that, like in an ashtray, month after month, that is money that we will have to provide services in this province for years to come.

The public radio system is something that was talked about for four or five years since I have been around: \$21 million and recognizing the need for safety. Also, once that technology is put in place, recognizing in rural parts we may be able to build on that for cellular coverage and a number of other things.

Just quickly highlighting some of the things in the budget that I was pleased with: \$4 million, Chair, for the Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System. I can tell you, as somebody who sat in the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development for 3½ years, we've got lots of challenges in the child welfare system and we want to get to a better place. We want to get to a better place for the children that are in the system. So I was really pleased to see that we've got Judge Igloliorte who's going to lead that, with Anastasia Qupee. There are a number of commissioners put in place and that's well on its way.

Sometimes, Chair, people say: symbolism, why does that matter? Why are we spending money into monuments and symbolism? Chair, there's a story to tell. Indigenous people in this province know their story, but non-Indigenous people don't. There's an education piece that has to happen. So I'm excited that when you think about the sad legacy of the Beothuk people, that there's now going to be a statue that will stand outside this seat of government and there will be an education piece that comes with that.

Funding for things like the Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering so those people can come together. They can talk about their common issues and they can propose change to government, where change is needed around policy and things like that.

Chair, even in my own district, the planning for the Cartwright school; I truly see that as a reconciliation piece and it was very, very heart warming for me on Budget Day to hear the word Cartwright in the minister's speech. We just had the last site of the last residential school, Lockwood School, just torn down last fall. It was a very emotional day in the community of Cartwright. We've got children there now in an old dilapidated wooden-structure school that's almost six decades old. Those children deserve to be able to go into a clean, fully accessible building.

Education, Chair, again and again and again and again, when I was a part of the anti-racism committee, the one thing that came up was education. We need to start with education and by having a new school for those children, which the money is here to start the planning in this budget, we will be giving these Indigenous children in that community an equal start going forward.

So while it's challenging times, we'll find our way through. We can't lose sight of the nuggets that are in this budget along with some measures to help offset the cost of living.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Chair now recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm going to have a few words on the debate today.

I heard a lot of people saying across the way that – referring that people don't care. I don't know, I'd say in many cases what you're doing, you're bringing issues forth, but I'm going to give a good example to find out if you really do care. It's do to with the cataracts.

I know myself and the Minister of Health and Community Services were going back and forth with all the information that I have. Then there were a few things mentioned last week again, the minister in a couple of his questions said in talking about the benchmark and other things. So I did a bit of research over the weekend, because I'm passionate on the issue, when you

have 800 seniors who could have their eyes fixed at no cost to the government, yet the government refuses to do it.

We always hear the government saying that any decision is made is on consensus. So if it's a Cabinet decision why this can't be done, why don't Cabinet have a discussion? It's a point where I'm after providing more information and I tabled some of it, and I'll give whoever wants the information, they can definitely have the information about the cost, the Grant Thornton report, where it's cheaper to do it – all the information.

I'm not doing this to try to banter on the government; I'm presenting facts. There are 800 seniors that can get their eyes done, no wait-list, have to wait for a year or a year and a half, less cost to the government and get rid of the wait-list. I can provide it any Member opposite.

This is what bothers me most, Mr. Chair, is that the government won't react to it. They won't act on it. I asked the Premier, I asked the Minister of Health to sit down with the three specialist in Western Health and work this out. Every time the minister makes a statement, I present documents to say hold it now, there's a discrepancy here with Western Health.

I'm going to read something, because the minister was talking last week about the wait times and the backlogs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

It's just a little difficult to hear the Member.

Thank you.

E. JOYCE: And it's in *Hansard* so I'm not putting words in anybody's mouth, this is in *Hansard*.

The weekend I did a bit of research. I said well that's not the information I'm getting so I'm going to read the information that I have. This is coming from the Canadian Institute for Health Information. This is right from the articles, Canadian Institute: For cataract surgery, 66 per cent of patients across Canada are within the

recommended time frame, 112 days, between October '20-'21 compared to 70 per cent in the prepandemic period. Seven out of 10 provinces – this is information I say to the Minister for Seniors, you should be very concerned about this because most of those people are under your department. You can look it up yourself; you know where to get it. You can look it up, Sir, because I know you are concerned. I have to give you credit, the minister, you always respond and stuff.

So this is why it is very important. I would like for you to look this up so you can see it yourself. It is right there in their release that they made. I just want to read this because the minister was putting out information about how we are all within the wait time.

“For 7 of 10 provinces, the wait times were shorter or similar to those in the pre-pandemic period; however, the proportion of patients in Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland who were treated within benchmark ... lower than in the pre-pandemic period.” That's the study. That's not me saying that. And you know where you can look that up right now, yourself.

So the information that I have been presenting is that there is a massive wait-list and people aren't getting – they are confirming that. We are one in the three provinces and we are talking about the wait-lists. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands brought up one of his constituents that called, they're on the wait-list.

We have to get rid of the wait-list. If we don't get rid of the wait-list, which we can do very easily, we will always have 600, 700, 800 seniors who have to wait over a year or 14 or 16 months to get their eyes done. It is not the people who are getting done come April 1, because they already had their appointment with the ophthalmologist. What we are talking about is the wait-list; the ones that they see now that have to wait until next April to start. This is the ones we are talking about.

Now, I am going to continue on reading, Mr. Chair. This is from Tracy Johnson, the director of Health Analytics for CIHI. You can look it up on the website: “...because even if you can ramp up to what you were pre-pandemic, get your waits down, you still have that backlog

you're trying to make your way through,' said Tracy Johnson, director of health system analytics at CIHI.'"

"Johnson said that's mainly because cataract surgery is typically performed in a clinic, rather than a hospital." She's talking about how well other provinces have done but not Newfoundland. That is her own comments right in that article.

So I ask the Minister of Seniors to please just look at that, and you have to go to bring it up around Cabinet. I'm not here trying to beat on the government. I'm trying to get that done.

I tell you another thing you can check on – and I don't mean to be pointing you out but it is a seniors' issue – check with Halifax. Do you know what the Halifax health authority did in the last two to three weeks? They took 2,300 patients they had on for the hospital and gave it to a private clinic. They asked them to do 1,200 to 1,500. Then they realized the big backlog – 2,300 gone to a private clinic in Halifax to get rid of the wait-list.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: So this is not something that you're asking for in Corner Brook; this is something that you're doing all across Canada. It is amazing to me why this government won't help out 800 seniors in this province. It's going to be cheaper and they won't have to wait 14 or 16 months to get their cataract surgery done, yet we won't do it because of a personality conflict. This is where I think the Liberals have lost their value. I just heard the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs – we hear it. We'd love to be able to do more. Here's your opportunity.

There are people from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair that have to go to Corner Brook and on the wait-list. There are people from the Premier's district on the wait-list. People from the Member for Corner Brook are on the wait-list. St. George's - Humber are on the wait-list. The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, people on the wait-list.

This is not something that I'm coming up with. This is not something that I'm dreaming up. This is proof: The Canadian Institute for Health Information are saying it themselves that Newfoundland is one of the three provinces that haven't caught up with prepandemic. A lot of the other places that are doing it is because they're going to private clinics.

We hear so many times about the backlog of surgeries. What better way, if there were times at the hospital, there are two days, optional third day a month – as I said earlier, ophthalmology for all the people across the province. What was recommended by the minister is cancel everybody across the province so you do cataracts – what an option. Everywhere else across Canada, when they go to private clinics, the wait-list is gone or it's almost totally taken off the books.

We have an opportunity in Western Newfoundland to take care of the wait-list, yet we won't do it. So when I hear the Members opposite talking about, well, don't say we don't care, here's an opportunity to prove that you do care. Here is an opportunity to say you do care.

I asked the minister responsible for Seniors: Will you please look at this information and bring it to Cabinet? There's not much more I can do than present the information, almost beg for the 800 seniors, yet it still goes on deaf ears.

So sometimes when you ask, do you think we really care, when this here could be done very easily. Someone got to question, why isn't it done? I will continue to fight on behalf of those 800 seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I next recognize the Member representing the District of Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

It's always a pleasure to get up and speak on behalf of the residents in Topsail - Paradise. For the Minister of Health, just to confirm, earlier today I spoke about checking a gas light and checking your oil. For those who know, I drive a

Jeep that's about 13 years old and every light on the dash is on, so easy to make a mistake there. But I think the point was made, and at least you were listening. That's the good thing.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: With me, right? With me.

It's interesting speaking to the cost of living and the budget, and my colleague from Terra Nova pointed out the Churchill Falls agreement. I know we talk a lot about the \$500 million that's paid annually now to pay down on the Muskrat Falls, but I've noted before in this House that a good portion of this House weren't around to vote on the Muskrat Falls deal.

I agree with the topic of it, when it says it's a misguided project. I have no problem agreeing with that, when you read through the report. But I think the point that my colleague from Terra Nova made, when he touched on the Churchill Falls agreement – I'm just looking at some information here. Just reading the contract here, it says the price of power was set at \$2.90 per megawatt hour in the first five years. It fell to \$2.50 per megawatt hour in the next 25, and then on September 1, 2016, the price fell again to \$2 per megawatt hour. And this equates to Hydro – so Hydro sold the power from \$60 to \$90 a megawatt hour. That's massive profits they made – massive profits.

In fact, they did a filing in 1989 and at 2021 dollars; the Churchill Falls contract was valued at \$400 billion. So to put it all in perspective, yes, Muskrat Falls, misguided project. But also we go back to the Churchill Falls Project, and we would never have been a have-not province had we been getting the profits from that project that we were more than entitled to.

So just a point there. And the point I make on that is we have to move forward. I know it is something we're dragging with. We dragged Churchill Falls; we'll drag Muskrat Falls. But we have to start dealing with what is happening in the here and now. It may require short-term measures, temporary measures; we'll get through this because the Premier just appointed a task force to look at the ending of the Churchill Falls agreement in 2041. Believe it or not, 19 years will be quick coming. Hopefully, at

that point in time, the deal we negotiate then will pay off Muskrat Falls and we'll have money for our future generations.

AN HON. MEMBER: Some of us will still be here.

P. DINN: The Member says some of us will still be here. I don't know if I'll be here.

But anyway, the fact of that matter is that we have to look to the future. We have to look to dealing with issues today. We have to live for today and work through that.

Just looking at the chart here, because I get this question a lot and I know everyone here in the House has heard it from everyone. We're all getting questions; we're all dealing with people and residents who have issues with the cost of living. We're not saying that you're not doing anything; we're saying that there could be more done and just look at some situations.

If you look at the PUB, they put out a chart on gas prices, a pie chart. It was out in the news a little while back. It was looking at the price of gas right now at \$2.14 – this article actually looked at it at \$2.14. I had questions from residents asking: Can you give us a little chart to tell us the breakdown? And this was so timely. If we're basing on the price of gas at \$2.14 a litre, you look at this and you say federal excise tax is 10 cents on that litre; the provincial gas tax is 14.5 cents on that litre; carbon tax is 11.05 cents on that litre; and then the HST is 27.94 cents on that litre. So do the math; 64 cents a litre is in taxes on a litre of gas. Of course, the allowed markup is around 25 cents, 26 cents.

The reason I'm hearing from residents asking about this is because they want to know where is the money going in a litre of gas and are there opportunities for some easement for individuals now. It doesn't have to be long term, but something for the next two or three months to get our residents through this, because the cost of living is certainly affected by the cost of a litre of gas.

Just while I was in the House, just within the last half hour – we're all getting them and it's sad – I got an email from a resident, she thanked me for helping her in the past. I can't recall what I

helped her with, but it's always nice to get those emails, but she went on to say, in the last year or so her mother had passed, she had issues making the rent on her house. She found an apartment and a new job – she lost her job actually through COVID. But do you know what she's calling about now? She wants to know: How do I apply for income support? This is a young woman who had been working, working in a job making a living, going back and forth, and right now simply the cost of gas to get to her new job is just not affordable for her. It's not there.

These are real-life situations of individuals on a daily basis who are feeling the pinch and feeling the crisis of our increased cost of living. As I said before in this House, those who were just making ends meet a month ago, they're not making ends meet now. There are residents I've spoken to who have totally, totally exhausted their savings. Some are actually diving into their RRSPs. Some are making some very difficult decisions. I heard from one, when they served their dinner in the night, they put half away, because we'll use that tomorrow. Leftovers are becoming more common than they were in the past and it's because they're trying to stretch their dollar longer.

This past weekend, as an example, I was out to a seniors' event up in my district – it's great to see them all out after two years of COVID and very limited activities – I made my way around, chatted with every table. They go up, they have a dinner, they have a game of cards and then they have a little dance afterwards, and every table had concerns about the cost of living and the health care.

They had a lot of other comments, some I can't repeat in the House, but they were the two main drivers, the main discussions we had. Those are mainly – in that room – are people on fixed incomes and they're always asking when's it going to end? What can be done?

Well, I outlined the diagram here on the cost of a litre of gas just to give some information out to the public who have been asking, but also to say there is opportunity to move around. There is wiggle room. We debated the carbon tax and we talk about climate change – we have absolutely no issue admitting that climate change is an issue. We also see some benefit, although it's a

bit more of a punishment than anything when you talk about tax, carbon tax.

But at the end of the day, we're really focused on all tax, or all ways in which we can assist our constituents and residents and being able to live a good life; to be able to live, work and play where they were raised; and to, at least, afford the necessities of life and maybe the odd luxury along the way. But we are definitely talking about some very difficult decisions that have been made about the necessities of life and those decisions are becoming more difficult each day. And if I hear the news properly and we see that the price of gas is going up again this evening, I can't imagine the hurt on people tomorrow.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes the Member representing the District of Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to talk a little bit about mental health. Earlier on in May, we had –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I can't hear the Member.

Thank you.

L. EVANS: My time is ticking away so I'll continue to speak even though most people won't be able to hear me.

I just want to talk a little bit about mental health in the budget. Just looking at mental health, last week, earlier on, the Minister of Health said there was no wait-list for counselling services for Labrador-Grenfell Health – no wait-lists.

So I was actually surprised and I was thinking, okay, so is this a good thing, if there's no wait-list for Labrador-Grenfell Health? I look at my district and I look at Labrador, we have the highest rate of addictions, especially alcoholism, in my district. Addictions is a serious issue. It creates a lot of problems. We have the highest

rate of incarceration in our prisons. That brings a lot of problems. We have the highest rate of sexual assaults in the province; four times the provincial average, I think. That brings a lot of issues, a lot of problems. We have the highest rate of suicides in the province, one of the highest rates across Canada.

So when you look at the highest rates of suicide don't you think there is mental health issues? Just this year alone, we had suicides, and it is not only our youth that are committing suicide.

So, for me, that shows that there is a huge issue: mental health. To me, that symbolizes the need for counselling. So if Labrador-Grenfell Health has no wait-list, well what is the problem? It's like the Titanic, you're steaming along and there's a little tip of the iceberg, and the Minister of Health says there is no wait-list. So who is failing? There is a huge iceberg that is there in front of us and we are going along as if there is no problem; there is no issue.

I think it's a huge failing. I think Labrador-Grenfell Health has actually failed here. I think all of us share the responsibility, but there is a huge need for counselling. So we need to be able to actually provide the services that the people need.

I also want to talk a little bit about quality of life in my district. We are now discussing the provincial budget: Quality of life in my district and mental health issues. Well, there is no wait-list for counselling needs for Labrador-Grenfell Health, but a lot of the issues – it is not just this so-called intergenerational trauma. It's not just this need for reconciliation. In my district, we actually need quality of life. We actually need things to improve quality of life.

Families and individuals need a safe place to live. They need it to be safe and warm. They also need the ability to feed their families. In my district, this is not a problem that was created yesterday. This is an ongoing issue: Quality of life.

I have to say that this provincial government has done things since they got elected in 2015 to actually erode quality of life in my district – erode quality of life, budget after budget. It's not only about taking away the freight boat from the

Island that actually is creating huge problems with the price of food – and a lot of people will argue with me but not a single person in my district will argue with me: prices of food, quality of life.

There have been huge announcements. We're going to have the inquiry now for the Innu children in care. One of the biggest problems that people face when they're trying to get their children back from CSSD is the ability to provide a safe place to raise their families, a warm place so their children are not going to school cold. They need to be able to provide food for their children, but all of these things have been eroded, the abilities for people to actually be able to get their children back.

If you suffered real intergenerational trauma, well, the problem is a lot of times you're facing issues that actually are triggers, and it creates a lot of problems and people basically fail to be able to get their children back.

Let's just look at some of the other issues that were talked today: search and rescue. We had the search and rescue inquiry, but one of the things that came out during the inquiry was, in actual fact, these volunteer search and rescue group in my district Makkovik, Postville, Hopedale, Nain – they talk about it, having to fundraise so they can actually have subscriptions to SPOT and inReach. When they're out trying to find people and save their lives, they can actually have the equipment to do it safely for themselves. They're not only trying to save people, but they're not endangering their own lives – a volunteer group having to fundraise so they can have the equipment to be able to do the job properly.

When I was in Makkovik and then we went to Hopedale, I was very honoured to spend some time with Commissioner Judge James Igloliorte. We've commonly called him Judge James, because he spent a lot of his career as a judge. Well, Commissioner Judge Igloliorte and also Mr. Geoff Budden, we actually went into Hopedale. One of things that we did when we were sitting around the table with the ground search and rescue team from Hopedale, we were talking about the needs, and one of the points I made to Commissioner Igloliorte and Geoff Budden, who was working with the Crown, the

point I brought up is recent deaths during search and rescue, where it was actually a recovery.

Within the last year and a half, there was two specific cases that I brought up. One was a young woman, a mother who actually passed away in the winter. She went through the ice and she actually died. The people of Hopedale, ground search and rescue knew her. Many of them were related to her. They searched to try and find her and then when they did find her, they had to recover her body.

The point I made when we were sitting around the table with the ground search and rescue team is: What counselling services did you get? That must have been very, very traumatic. Actually, there were a couple individuals that were on the team that couldn't come back to active service because they were still suffering some mental health issues around that traumatic experience.

Then, within that year, we had a young man graduate from high school – a wonderful, wonderful person who you saw had such a bright future. That summer he drowned in the harbour, just feet away from the shore. People in the community heard him. The rescue team had to get together and mobilize. They went out and he was under the water and they had to try and find him. They had to try to recover him. They got him out. People were friends and relatives and had really close, personal relationships – very, very traumatic.

And I said to the search and rescue team –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

It is just a little difficult to hear.

L. EVANS: – that was there: What counselling did you have to help you through that trauma of your friend, your relative, who had just, basically, practically died in front of you? None. That is one of the things that I want to make sure that people who were going to be making decisions about the recommendations, people who are going to be coming up to address the needs of this volunteer ground search and rescue for the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, is that mental health issues need to be

addressed for these people who day to day go out and risk their lives to try and save people. Not only are they impacted physically and have the physical challenges of the environment, they have the mental health challenges as well, the emotional challenges of always having to face the reality that maybe it is not going to be a rescue, it is going to be a recovery and then when it is a recovery, what they go through.

These are very, very important things. In my district with just the extreme environmental issues, but also we don't have cellphone service. If we get lost, we can't take out our cellphone and call for help. Also –

CHAIR: Thank you.

I remind the Member your time is expired.

Seeing no further speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 49)

CLERK (Barnes): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2, 3 and 4.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2, 3 and 4 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2023, and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, long title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 49 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the total contained in the Estimates

in the amount of \$7,974,380,800 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year be carried, and I further move that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$7,974,380,800 for the 2022-2023 fiscal year be carried and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

I recognize the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount of \$7,974,380,800 contained in the Estimates of Supply for the 2022-2023 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

S. COADY: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl North, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$5,290,818,600."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$5,290,818,600."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, for leave to introduce a Supply bill, Bill 49, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service, Bill 49, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," carried. (Bill 49)

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 49)

On motion, Bill 49 read a first time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 49 be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 49)

On motion, Bill 49 read a second time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, the Supply bill be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 49)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 49)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Earlier today, during Notices of Motion, there was a typographic error in Bill 63, Mr. Speaker. So, with leave, I would just like to reintroduce the notice on this piece of legislation.

SPEAKER: Does the hon. Member have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 5, Bill 63.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

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

SPEAKER: The motion is that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

This House stands in adjournment until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 3 in the afternoon.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 3 p.m.