



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Wednesday

October 5, 2022
(Throne Speech)

The House met at 2 p.m.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Please be seated.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, the Justices of the Supreme Court have arrived.

SPEAKER: Admit the Justices of the Supreme Court.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor has arrived.

SPEAKER: Admit Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(The Speaker leaves the Chair.)

(Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor takes the Chair.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It's the wish of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor that all present be seated.

HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (Judy May Foote, PC, ONL):

Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly:

As the representative of His Majesty King Charles III, I welcome the Members of the House of Assembly for the opening of this the Second Session of the Fiftieth General Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We open this session at a sombre time in the history of the Commonwealth with the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a steady presence in the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and other Canadians as our head of state for more than 70 years. Her reign was a historic one. Having visited our province three

times, Her Late Majesty always displayed great dignity, empathy, and a keen wit. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee this year.

To His Majesty the King, this Legislature affirms its continued loyalty. God Save the King! May His reign be a long one.

In opening this session, we respectfully acknowledge the province of Newfoundland and Labrador as the ancestral homelands of many diverse populations of Indigenous people who have contributed to 9,000 years of history including the Beothuk on the Island of Newfoundland. Today, this province is home to diverse populations of Indigenous and other people. We also acknowledge, with respect, the diverse histories and cultures of the Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit.

As we open the Second Session of the Fiftieth General Assembly, now is the time to reflect, re-evaluate, and assess where Newfoundland and Labrador stands after a very turbulent few years, both here and in many places around the world.

Global economic pressures are hitting the pockets of people all over the world, and impacts are equally being felt here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Across the country and beyond, staffing shortages are placing an additional strain on the delivery of health care services. And the impacts of climate change have altered the way we interact with our natural environment.

But challenges lead to opportunities. Opportunities to innovate and adapt. To step up and help those in need.

Like so many people in the province who have adapted, innovated, and reached out to help, My Government has led by embracing change. With Newfoundland and Labrador solutions to worldwide problems, My Government is rising to the challenge.

The resiliency of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is renowned and was on full display recently during the devastating forest fires in the central region and after the tragic impact of Hurricane Fiona.

My Government was there for the residents whose lives were affected by these events and it continues to work with its municipal and federal counterparts to ensure the supports are there for those who need them.

My Government immediately provided initial support of up to \$30 million to assist residents and communities as they recover from the effects of Hurricane Fiona.

My Government has been with the people of the southwest coast since the beginning and will continue to be with them every step of the way as they work to rebuild their lives, their homes and their communities.

MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE COST OF LIVING

The COVID-19 pandemic, global geopolitical pressures and supply chain issues have all contributed to an increase in the cost of living across Canada and beyond. Earlier this year, Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a five-point plan as the first set of several meaningful measures. This included: Increasing the Income Supplement; Increasing the Seniors' Benefit; A one-time benefit for those receiving income support; Funding for electric vehicles and the infrastructure required for them to operate; and Support for transitioning from heating our homes with oil to electricity.

My Government also eliminated the 15 per cent retail sales tax on home insurance for one year, offered a 50 per cent reduction in vehicle registration fees and lowered provincial gasoline taxes by more than eight cents per litre. The gas tax reduction will be extended until March 31, 2023.

The Home Heating Supplement Program offers residents a reimbursement of up to \$500 towards the purchase of furnace or stove oil to heat their home. Payments are already being disbursed. My Government has also successfully mitigated electricity rates through the \$5.2 billion partnership with the Government of Canada.

Recognizing that affordable child care is crucial to helping people, particular women, enter or re-enter the workforce, My Government has been a national leader in lowering costs to \$10 a day starting this coming January.

My Government recently announced three increases to the minimum wage, based on the recommendation of the Minimum Wage Review Committee, which will bring Newfoundland and Labrador's minimum wage to \$15 per hour by October of 2023. It also expanded the bus pass program to include seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement, as well as youth-in-care and those receiving youth services programming.

All told, My Government has provided almost a quarter of a billion dollars towards initiatives aimed at easing the financial burden that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are carrying due to no fault of their own. Perhaps the most generous package of initiatives in the country. And My Government is not finished yet.

IMPROVING FISCAL SITUATION

While measures such as these are necessary right now, decisions to help residents are made with the province's fiscal situation in mind – addressing our past, present, and future.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are well aware of the significant public debt that has been accumulated over the past few decades, and the debilitating effect this may have on future generations. This year, My Government will make payments towards

that debt, lowering borrowing costs, and addressing consequences of our past.

To address present challenges, My Government will introduce additional measures to address cost-of-living pressures. On top of the aforementioned programs and expenditures, My Government will provide direct relief to the people of this province as they face rising prices of everyday necessities. As the first order of business in this session of the House of Assembly, tax filers aged 18 and over by December 31, 2022, who have income less than \$100,000 will receive a cheque for \$500, and those with income of \$100,000 to \$125,000 will receive a cheque on a sliding scale with a minimum payment of \$250. This is non-taxable, does not require an application, and flows directly to residents. Because you know how best to spend it, for your family, right now, when you need it.

My Government is also looking ahead to the future. Accordingly, My Government will establish the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund that will be used to invest revenue from short-term, one-time, and non-renewable sources for the benefit of our next generations.

My Government looks forward to making the first contribution to the Future Fund this year. This will ensure the benefits of the current fiscal situation will provide solid footing for challenging years to come. Just imagine, had this foresight existed in the past, the saving grace it could have been during tough fiscal times.

My Government remains committed to achieving surplus. It will achieve this with continued strong and responsible financial management. My Government has made legislative changes to strengthen the Office of the Auditor General and its oversight of government entities, and changes to the Financial Administration Act to include a new focus on debt repayment, more effective debt financing, and the future fund.

Through prudent fiscal governance it is keeping government's expenditures fair, continuing transformational initiatives, and ensuring maximum of every provincial dollar spent on public services. Through responsible debt management, My Government will continue to lower the cost of debt servicing, and enhance government's treasury management expertise. This approach is working, as evidenced by recent improved outlooks from the major credit reporting agencies.

INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE

My Government is taking concrete actions to improve health care services and ensure the appropriate care is available at the appropriate time to those who need it.

While recognizing these challenges are not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador, My Government is committed to implementing a Newfoundland and Labrador solution that meets the needs of residents while considering the work environment and needs of our valued health care professionals. Much work has been done, with much more underway.

Community-based teams are the foundation required to transform primary health care. A collaborative community team features a diverse team of health care professionals that provides a wide range of patient services to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

Teams may include health care professionals such as physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and other allied health professionals such as social workers, pharmacists, and dietitians. Several of these teams have now been established across the province, and more initiatives are in various stages of development and implementation. My Government will continue to build off the success of team-

based care to address specific needs in communities.

Recognizing the need for people to receive important health services as quickly as possible, My Government created a surgical task force to address the surgical backlog. It also developed an innovative partnership with the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, and launched same-day knee and hip replacement surgery to speed up access.

My Government remains committed to providing primary care and emergency room services to both urban and rural parts of the province where staffing challenges exist, and virtual care is an option to address these challenges. All stakeholders are working together to implement solutions.

The process to procure a new, integrated health information system has commenced, that will allow sharing of critical health care information across the province. This system will engage residents in their health journey by providing digital access to their health care information and enhanced services, such as insights into the referral or test ordering process.

My Government has increased investment and innovation in the delivery of mental health and addictions treatment by establishing mental health teams, expanding mobile crisis response services, and adding enhanced mental health and addictions crisis support to 811.

The health and safety of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians remains a priority of My Government. An ambulance system that meets the needs and addresses the challenges of our province is paramount, as recommended by Health Accord NL.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Central to all of these initiatives are the hard-working health care professionals who provide quality care to Newfoundland and

Labrador. My Government has initiated several concrete measures to increase the number of health care providers in the province.

A Provincial Health Professional Recruitment and Retention Office was established and launched The Extraordinary Every Day recruitment campaign.

Investment continues in post-secondary programs to increase the number of qualified licensed practical nurses, personal care attendants, registered nurses, and medical graduates, with a focus on rural areas.

In order to attract and retain physicians, My Government has offered numerous incentives, including: a Come Home Year incentive to bring health care professionals back to the province offering up to \$100,000 with a three- to five-year return-in-service agreement, and is available to primary and advanced care paramedics, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians; \$150,000 to new family physicians who open and join a practice in exchange for a five-year service agreement; income guarantee initiative launched for new family physicians in exchange for a two-year service agreement; increased compensation rates for physicians covering emergency departments in smaller rural health centres; and eligible Ukrainian physicians can receive up to \$10,000 to offset licensing costs in exchange for a two-year service agreement.

My Government has also implemented a one-year pilot program to help entice retired family physicians to come back to the workforce, and an additional five undergraduate seats have been added to Memorial University's Medical School for Newfoundland and Labrador students.

Compensation rates for covering emergency rooms in smaller rural health centres were increased as a temporary

measure to help retain existing physicians at these sites, as well as attract other locum positions during periods of vacancy. As well, in Labrador, Category A rates were increased in the last Memorandum of Agreement.

My Government participated in a Nursing Think Tank held in April with the Registered Nurses' Union of Newfoundland and Labrador, and developed financial incentives and initiatives to address immediate nursing challenges. These included retention bonuses, signing bonuses for casual registered nurses to encourage them to accept a full-time or part-time position in an area of need, double rate overtime for vacation period, reimbursement of licensing fees for retired registered nurses, a registered nurse locum premium, 24/7 mental health supports, exploring child care options, and bursaries for third-year nursing students. Requests for Proposals were also issued to help improve the workplace environment and the recruitment and retention of registered nurses and nurse practitioners.

My Government is working to remove barriers for international students, graduates, and professionals. Legislative amendments will be introduced to simplify the licensure requirements for internationally trained and qualified doctors and nurses to qualify here in Newfoundland and Labrador. A new Bursary Program will help internationally educated nurses meet Canadian standards, and five new seats will be added to the Family Medicine Residency Program for International Medical Graduates at Memorial University. Students around the world are excited by these programs, and are already applying.

My Government has introduced financial incentives and more employee supports in paramedicine to help alleviate pressures experienced by emergency services staff. With an investment of \$2 million for another 24/7 ambulance and more than 20 new permanent positions, as well as \$5.4 million

for air ambulance services, My Government will increase access and reliability. Medical Transportation Assistance Program enhancements will support fair and equitable access to medical programs.

Ensuring that appropriate infrastructure is in place to meet the health care needs of our people is critical to the success of the health system. Given the changing demography and ever-changing face of health care through technology and innovative solutions, My Government is taking the initiative to reimagine and realign the delivery of acute care services to ensure that it aligns with the province's future health care requirements.

In addition to continuing work on the west coast hospital, My Government is improving and expanding the emergency department at the Health Sciences Centre. The new emergency department will serve patients at the Health Sciences Centre and new adult mental health and addictions hospital, and include a psychiatric assessment unit, high acuity-trauma unit, care initiation area, ambulance parking garage, diagnostic imaging area, administration area, and a new entrance and registration area.

But this is only the beginning. A general lack of in-patient beds and access to surgical capacity is a barrier to care. To address these issues, My Government will be working with the provincial health authority to implement a number of intermediate and long-term solutions to modernize the existing infrastructure, including evaluating potential expansions of operating room and bed capacity in the province's busiest hospitals.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

While dealing with these immediate health care needs, Newfoundland and Labrador is taking the lead in addressing systemic health care issues that are being experienced throughout Canada and around the world. We are not immune to these

challenges, but we are moving with a sense of urgency to reimagine our health care system, including addressing the key social determinants of health, and leading the country in navigating this national crisis.

My Government acknowledges that a person's health is influenced by the conditions in which they are born, live, eat, exercise, learn, work, and play. It is influenced by their feeling respected and safe, and by their being able to age with dignity. To a lesser degree, it is influenced by the health care system and biology.

My Government is working to improve the well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by making changes in the social, economic, and environmental conditions that affect our health, and by rebalancing our health care system across community, hospitals, and long-term care.

SENIORS

My Government recognizes that the demography is vastly different than decades ago, despite the fact that our systems, including health care, have remained relatively unchanged by comparison. Today, seniors outnumber children considerably and this trend is expected to continue over the coming years.

A number of recommendations arose from the Health Accord, including to develop and implement a formal Provincial Frail Elderly Program; support the further development of age-friendly communities and to end ageism; implement a continuum of care for older adults; and develop and implement provincial legislation, regulation, and policy to provide care and protection for older people. To take this even further, My Government will establish a Cabinet committee on seniors to be led by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development. Supported by a cross departmental virtual secretariat, and building off the work of Health Accord NL, this team will revolutionize how we address

seniors' issues, from medical issues regarding the frail elderly to wraparound services to help seniors age in place with dignity.

PAY EQUITY

My Government continues to make the advancement of women and gender-diverse people a priority and will introduce legislation on pay equity during this session to complement the many other measures that have been implemented to close the wage gap and advance equity. Enacting pay transparency and equity initiatives demonstrates further concrete action to support women and gender-diverse people who have traditionally faced inequitable employment practices.

RECONCILIATION

With the recent marking of the second annual Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, it was a time for reflection on the province's relationship and history with Indigenous people.

My Government remains committed to consultations with Indigenous groups and weekly meetings with leaders that support open and frank discussions on important issues.

Considerable work is being done through the Provincial Indigenous Women's Gatherings and recommendations provided from the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee will inform actions that may be taken to address the primary concerns of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals, and communities, including the prevention of systemic violence and discrimination. My Government will continue to work with partners from across the country to advance the National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

My Government and the Innu Nation have launched the Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System. The ultimate goal of the Commission will be to make necessary changes that guarantee the protection and safety of all Innu youth in care.

IMMIGRATION

My Government is pleased that the population of Newfoundland and Labrador has grown for five consecutive quarters. This reversing trend leads to a stronger and more diverse province and lends to optimism for the future.

This growth is being fuelled by immigration, which has become a resounding success due to programs and policies we have introduced. We are well on our way to welcoming more than 5,100 newcomers annually; perhaps even earlier than the 2026 target announced last year.

My Government was a national leader in welcoming refugees from Ukraine: first setting up a Ukrainian Family Support Desk here at home and then establishing one on the ground in Poland to assist Ukrainians fleeing war in their homeland. Employees assigned to the Ukrainian Family Support Desk have done an exemplary job since March to promote Newfoundland and Labrador, answer questions, and help potential immigrants navigate the complex regulations and laws that would permit them to come to Canada. My Government also acted quickly to ensure that Ukrainians arriving here had access to the Medical Care Plan and the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and valid driver's licences.

My Government thanks the many community organizations, businesses and individuals who have assisted, and continue to assist, by providing jobs, offering guidance and donations and opening their homes. Newfoundland and Labrador's

legendary hospitality has been on full display once again, and we are proud to share that the third airlift of Ukrainian refugees is expected to arrive in the coming weeks.

Of course, Newfoundland and Labrador has always welcomed immigrants from other parts of the world. Just last month, refugees from Afghanistan arrived to join the growing community that already call Newfoundland and Labrador home.

My Government made recent budget commitments to eliminate fees under the Provincial Nominee Program and for staff with the provincial Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism to provide an array of free services to newcomers and employers. These include assistance with preparing and submitting applications through the Atlantic Immigration Program and the Provincial Nominee Program. Such measures have resulted in our province welcoming a record number of permanent residents to Newfoundland and Labrador.

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Socially, culturally, and economically, the arts community makes an incredibly important contribution to our communities, and our province.

Newfoundland and Labrador's special story is told through music, writing, dancing, art, craft, film, and television. The creative sector grows jobs and attracts tourists to Newfoundland and Labrador.

My Government sees the exciting potential of the province's expanding film and television sector and the approximately 1,400 people that it employs. Through initiatives such as the Film and Television Equity Investment Program, an all-spend film and video production tax credit, and a new Film and Media Production Centre at College of the North Atlantic in St. John's, it is catalyzing continued growth of this sector.

I would be remiss if I did not use this occasion to acknowledge the life-long effort of Paul Pope who we sadly lost this past spring. He was a dynamic force and his lasting legacy will be felt in the province's burgeoning film and television industry.

CLEAN ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Newfoundland and Labrador's key industries have also been expanding, in sustainable and beneficial ways. My Government will ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador remains a leader in Canada in addressing climate change and supplying clean energy to the world.

My Government recently welcomed the Prime Minister of Canada and the German Chancellor for the signing of a Declaration of Intent to establish a Canada-Germany Hydrogen Alliance, and Newfoundland and Labrador has since signed an agreement with the City of Hamburg. These historic agreements display to the world the significant potential of the province's renewable energy resources, including wind and hydrogen development, and signal My Government's commitment to entering the global marketplace.

Earlier this year My Government lifted the moratorium on commercial and energy wind developments and released guidelines for entities exploring wind energy projects. These guidelines include a two-phased approach with a call for land nominations followed by a call for land bids.

Projects will also go through a thorough and robust environmental assessment process that can be completed in a timely manner so Newfoundland and Labrador can be one of the first out of the gate in this competitive marketplace.

The interest in wind energy is significant with businesses, investors, and industry associations all approaching government with ideas or proposals. The province's

location as the gateway to Europe, plentiful wind resources, and world-class expertise in resource development will be considerable assets for Newfoundland and Labrador to thrive.

This exciting new industry will complement My Government's support of established natural resource industries. The oil and gas industry remains a major contributor to the economy, and source of well-paying employment for many. New developments including the Bay du Nord project demonstrate how Newfoundland and Labrador can be a global leader in low-carbon oil at this time when the world needs it most.

Industries such as fisheries, mining, forestry, and agriculture will continue to sustain the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador as they continue to grow through investments in technology, skills training, and green initiatives.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Newfoundland and Labrador has seen considerable infrastructure improvements in recent years to better serve residents. These include new long-term care facilities in Corner Brook, Gander, and Grand-Falls Windsor, and St. John's and mental health infrastructure in Labrador. Considerable work continues on the new hospital for the west coast region, and a new mental health and addictions facility and expansions at the Health Sciences Centre.

These investments in infrastructure produce massive returns by creating well-paying jobs and improving programs and services.

My Government recognizes that for the first time in decades, school enrolment is increasing and will ensure there are proper facilities in place for new and existing students through new school construction and the redevelopment of existing facilities.

Work is underway on a new provincial correctional facility to replace the penitentiary in St. John's, as well as a new public building and courthouse for the Bay St. George region.

Just this summer, the paving of the Trans-Labrador Highway was completed, marking a significant accomplishment in transportation infrastructure. The completion allows residents, tourists, and commercial traffic to travel on more than 1,100 kilometres of paved highway between the Labrador Straits and Labrador West. In addition, work is continuing towards the feasibility of completing a road to the North.

My Government acknowledges that climate change is impacting the capacity of transportation infrastructure to handle severe weather events. It will continue to improve the road network throughout the province by resurfacing highways and replacing bridges and culverts. It will continue to support municipalities so they can also make improvements within their boundaries.

CONCLUSION

Newfoundland and Labrador just experienced a fantastic summer and encouraged people from around the world to Come Home. As is our way, we warmly welcomed thousands to every nook and cranny across this great province. The hospitality industry persevered through the challenges of the pandemic and rose to the occasion this year, ensuring a banner year for travel and tourism.

We put our best foot forward to remind those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who now live away, why they remain attached to their home province. We also showed those who aren't from here, just what makes this place so special and unique. We are sure to see many of them again.

Come Home 2022 proved there is hope. It showed that despite any challenges, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians remain resilient and optimistic.

My Government will continue to fuel that hope and optimism by working to ensure this glorious piece of the world remains a place that we are proud to call home.

Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly:

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence the work of the Second Session of the Fiftieth General Assembly.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberation.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor leaves the Assembly Chamber.)

(The Speaker returns to the Chair.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Please be seated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011, Bill 1.

SPEAKER: Is there leave for the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation to introduce the said bill?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave granted.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that Bill 1, An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011, be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011. (Bill 1)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 1 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to make a speech to the Members of the General Assembly. We shall now take a few minutes to distribute the Speech from the Throne.

(The Pages distribute the speech to all Members.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

B. WARR: Thank you, Speaker.

On behalf of the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay, I move the motion to appoint a Select Committee to draft an Address in

Reply to the Speech from the Throne, seconded by the Member for the District of Mount Pearl North.

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

B. WARR: Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for being here today to read the Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne so eloquently presented by Her Honour gives the government an opportunity to highlight the many challenges we face and how we plan to address those challenges head on. I believe it is this government that will provide the necessary change our province not only needs but deserves.

As mentioned by Her Honour, I would also like to acknowledge the period of transition in the Commonwealth with the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. Her reign was one of commitment to duty and provided a great model for us to emulate. We look forward to the reign of King Charles III, building on the firm foundation the Queen established.

Speaker, the citizens of Baie Verte - Green Bay stand with the people of the province as we move forward from a period of significant provincial, national and global challenges towards what promises to be a future where Newfoundland and Labrador established itself as a leader based on resilience, skills of its people and the valuable renewable and non-renewable resources the province possess. I am committed to work diligently for the people of my district and with the other Members of this hon. House to achieve the bright future that we all deserve.

At the very outset, I want to acknowledge the place of reconciliation in so many aspects of the work that our government is engaged in. I believe our government has demonstrated a commitment to reconciliation and continuing to do so, it is

absolutely necessary to build a better province and a better nation.

Speaker, the challenges the province has faced in the past 2½ years are without precedent. A global pandemic that is still a factor in our lives, cost-of-living challenges, health care challenges, increasing impacts from climate change and international conflict as we witnessed in the Ukraine make this a period where we must all bring our best. I believe that if you look at Newfoundland and Labrador, you will find numerous examples of where the people of the province have risen to the challenges. Health care workers especially have been on the front lines constantly and we are indebted for their selfless efforts.

Through the many initiatives our government has undertaken with recruitment and retention, engaging in collaborative efforts such as the Nursing Think Tank and following the guidance laid out in our Health Accord NL, we will see improvements. Achieving a better tomorrow requires a solid plan, working with stakeholders and effecting change that ensures a more prosperous future. I believe our government has shown that foresight, conviction and collaboration.

Speaker, our province is poised for significant economic growth with the major projects announced, initiated or going into production. The recent approval for Bay du Nord, the restart of the West White Rose Project and work commenced to bring the Terra Nova field back into production have reinvigorated Newfoundland and Labrador's place as a leader in providing low-carbon oil to the world.

The mining industry, too, is not a sleeping giant anymore, as I see my district with Rambler Mines, Maritime Resources and Signal Gold Inc. contributing significantly to the local and provincial economy. Other mining operations like Marathon Gold, Newfound Gold and Search Minerals are becoming common names in the province.

The recent announcements in respect to wind energy on the West Coast and Argentia have ignited excitement among the people of those areas, in particular, and the province in general. There can be a bright tomorrow.

Speaker, in October of 2021, I had the distinct honour to stand in this House and introduce a private Member's resolution to make 2022 a provincial Come Home Year in all areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. Come Home Year was designed to signal a return to a more normal life as we emerge from the challenges of COVID and to support our crucial tourism and hospitality industry. I think we can all say that, overall, Come Home Year has been a resounding success and embraced by those who returned for the festivities and the citizens of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. WARR: It should be noted that events are still continuing for Come Home Year. Above all, Come Home Year demonstrates the resilience and stick-to-itiveness of the people and that we can overcome adversity.

This is also evident in how we responded to the recent destruction caused by Hurricane Fiona. We are a hearty people, and while realizing the increasing severity of Mother Nature's worst features, we buckle down, support each other and work together to build a better tomorrow.

Our government will continue to work with its citizens as we address the challenges we have faced, learn from them and prepare for the challenges of the future.

I have made my life in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and I am committed to working to create a better world for my family and the families of all residents of this province. I believe we are on the cusp of the great future in this province; the fact our population has shown growth over five star-like quarters demonstrates that. In that time,

we have added 3,565 people to the population. That's almost equivalent to adding the populations of my hometown, Springdale and Baie Verte, in just over a year. That's pretty encouraging.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. WARR: Speaker, the Speech from the Throne addressed what I have to say and much, much more. That in itself is exciting. The Speech from the Throne highlights the many accomplishments of this government, but more importantly, the things we are still working towards to ensure a prosperous future for the citizens of this province.

Being creative, responsive, collaborative and fiscally responsible are qualities we have exhibited. As our Premier has often said: We are only just started. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve no less.

Speaker, I say to the people of Baie Verte - Green Bay and to the people of this province: I will do my best, as we as a government will do our best, to build a better and brighter future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

I second the motion by the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay to appoint a Select Committee to draft an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I want to begin by first recognizing the residents of Mount Pearl North and thanking them for putting their trust and confidence in me as their Member of the House of Assembly. I look forward to continuing to support residents and advocate for them

within government and in the House of Assembly.

Thank you to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for being here today and delivering the Speech from the Throne. The Speech from the Throne gives all of us here today the opportunity to reflect on the hard work we have done and the work we must continue to do. It's an opportunity to be proud of who we are and to navigate the many challenges we have faced over the past number of years, and the opportunities to reflect on the common vision of a better and brighter future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We recognize, as highlighted in the Speech from the Throne, the challenges we are facing in Newfoundland and Labrador. Like the rest of Canada, we are dealing with the rising cost of living, the need for more health care professionals and the effects of climate change and more. These are indeed challenging times, but I am encouraged by the many measures already being taken by these challenges.

From increasing the Seniors' Benefit to lowering the cost of child care – we have increased the minimum wage, support for many residents of Newfoundland and Labrador in today's announcement. Putting money in the pockets of people will help with the cost of living today.

The challenges of our health care system are important to our people. I'm optimistic about the many initiatives being taken to improve our health care system. From investing in infrastructure and offering incentives to recruit and retain physicians – this is important work and I know the work will continue to be done.

The Speech from the Throne also acknowledges our aging population and the challenges it presents in our province. I certainly see this first-hand in my district. I understand the importance of supporting seniors and supporting government

initiatives that improve health care and access to affordable housing for everyone.

Communities across the province pride themselves in our community spirit. The community spirit in Mount Pearl is no different than any other. Come Home Year 2022 gave everyone the opportunity to showcase their community spirit. Come Home Year was a success. It gave us all reason to celebrate after a difficult couple of years.

We can continue to foster the community spirit going forward by participating in our community events. I look forward every year to things like the Frosty Festival and the many sporting activities that take place in my district.

Speaker, for over 25 years I have served the people of Mount Pearl as city councillor. It was there that I learned that working together is what it's all about. That is what we are doing here: working together as a team for the betterment of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am proud to be part of this team.

Speaker, the Speech from the Throne outlined some of the great work we've done, and it also challenges us to continue this work. I want to say to the people of Mount Pearl North and to the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I will continue to work hard on your behalf and support you and advocate for you for a better and brighter future for us all.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, to start off on a light note and let the Minister of Fisheries and lands over there know: This speech is not an hour long.

Out by the door I told him we had at least an hour and his face dropped, so I wanted to clarify that for him.

Speaker, it's always a privilege to stand in this House – and not in this House. This House is really unique, of course. It's a great privilege. As I was sitting listening to the Speech from the Throne and looking around, there's no one from Conception Bay South, no Member for Conception Bay South ever sat in this House, in this Legislature.

CBS was formed in 1973; it was made up of a lot of small communities. As a matter of fact, I think my district used to be Harbour Main. My colleague from Harbour Main – that was the name of Conception Bay South. So we were never ever represented by name in this Legislature, so it's kind of nice to put an end to that legacy.

Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the gracious delivery of the Speech from the Throne. She's the first Lieutenant Governor to give a speech here in a very long time, and she has the advantage of being able to just take a short walk across the street.

I'd like to thank both the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Mount Pearl North for their seconding motions, for seconding the speech. It's always a pleasure and it's a great honour to have that ability to do that. I'd like to acknowledge, of course, the guests in the galleries and people listening at home.

As today is my first opportunity to speak following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I'd like to take a moment, on behalf of our entire caucus, to express our sympathies. Her Majesty was a true example of dedication to service, never wavering in her commitment.

We note the recognition of Indigenous people and history in the speech. Indigenous people have said they need

more than symbolic changes; they need substantive changes that will improve the quality of life: access to health care, infrastructure and services, affordable food and fuel and support for their communities. We need action on recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the findings of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

We need acknowledgement and apologies for the treatment of families and children. In light of the terrible revelations about residential schools, wearing an orange shirt is only the beginning.

As it is noted, Mr. Speaker, the Colonial Building – I want to acknowledge the historic setting of this building. I understand the first sitting of this House in this location was on January 28, 1850, when Queen Victoria was at the throne. It was 172 years back.

The building has seen a lot of history. It was ransacked in April 5, 1932 by an angry mob, spurred on by economic turmoil on the hunt for Prime Minister Squires. The mob got its wish and the government fell, but it also led to the loss of our democracy for a long time under Commission of Government, which shows what can happen when things get out of control.

That's right; the Liberals in 1932 were thrown out because they didn't listen to the people. Is there a pattern? The building was also, apparently, the site of the first bank robbery in the province because there was a bank in the basement. I hope there is not one there now.

Confederation was debated here, both the pros and cons.

Speaker, there's another interesting note. A lot may notice in the House – I have always been intrigued by a little bit of history. I am a traditionalist. The government chose to sit on the Speaker's left, despite the tradition of other Parliaments in government should sit

on the right. It is all about the heaters which were located on the Speaker's left. So I guess it is interesting how the government always tries to keep the Opposition out in the cold. Nothing has changed.

The last sitting in the Chamber was on July 28, 1959. The Speaker at the time closed with the words – which turned out to be not quite true – on this occasion, the last perhaps in history, which anyone other than Your Honour will be permitted to speak. He had no way of knowing we would be here today speaking, 63 years later.

That year, in 1959, was a very momentous one for our province. 1959 was the year of the terrible IWA loggers strike in Badger which cost the life of RNC Constable William Moss. There was two minutes of silence in this Chamber to mark that tragedy, and it was reported that Members were so silent that you could hear the ticking of the clock high up on the north wall.

1959 was also the year of the terrible fight between Smallwood and the Diefenbaker government over Term 29 transfer payments. An issue barely remembered today, even though we are still struggling with Ottawa for fair transfer payments for health care, equalization; proving that not much has changed on that front.

Speaking of Ottawa, I must note that the Speech from the Throne was absent on a comment to push for greater control of our fishery, greater fiscal transfers and greater acknowledgement of what our province brings to this country. I hope the government are willing to stand up to Ottawa for greater provincial benefit.

1959 was also the year the provincial general election was called immediately after the prorogation speech read on the last sitting day in this Chamber. 1959 was also the year that Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited the province. At that point, she had already been Queen for seven years, beginning in 1952. She

reigned even longer than this Chamber has been closed.

We now mark her passing and reopen the site under the leadership of His Majesty King Charles III. We extend our best wishes to the new King who visited here just this year, unaware at the time how this year would turn out.

Speaker, this year's Throne Speech was a long time coming but it is always good to hear the government's plans. We join everyone in the province expressing our condolences to the family and friends of the woman who tragically lost her life in the storm and our support for the many who lost their homes and their valued possessions and suffered in other ways. I'll also thank the first responders and volunteers for their quick and diligent response.

Storms seem to be getting worse and many towns are vulnerable. In Central Newfoundland, it was the forest fires threatening towns. There were prior storms in Port aux Basques and other communities like Trepassey.

We note the recognition of exciting things happening on the development side: hydrogen in Stephenville, wind in Port au Port and Argentia (inaudible). We applaud the proponents and local residents for their leadership for making these projects happen; credit where credit is due.

There have also been losses, like the Woodside offshore investment and a major agriculture venture. You have to do a better job following through and seeing these projects to fruition. You must also do better to ensure local benefits agreements are in place for new projects so local communities can capture those opportunities.

We note that Come Home Year was a banner year for tourism but, in truth, operators desperately needed a lifeline after COVID, Mr. Speaker. We thank everyone who came back home or came for the first

time. Those visits brought to mind those deficiencies that we need to focus on if we hope to keep tourism growing and better serve our own residents – the need for reliable access to health care, clean drinking water, (inaudible), paved roads and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, we note the admission that the cost of living is a major issue right now; we all say it. Unfortunately, it took 15 months of advocacy from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and us in the Official Opposition for something meaningful from this government to help the people of our province under the crushing weight of the cost-of-living crisis.

Not once, but twice the Liberals have had to amend their most recent budget, because the supports they offered the people of the province are simply not enough. It took 15 months of political pressure for the government to finally realize that what they have proposed was not enough. They waited until the opening of the Legislature to make today's announcement; I mean, pure politics, Mr. Speaker.

If they had taken those concerns seriously, today's announcement would have come months ago. Instead, the Premier, I guess, wanted another photo op – and I appreciate that. We thank the Premier for finally listening, though, and I hope that it won't be another 15 months before he decides to listen to the people again.

There are still those that will fall through the cracks and miss this \$500 payment. *The Telegram* just published a piece about our most vulnerable people: those with unstable housing who are forced to sleep in tents or on a stage on George Street. If any of these people have not filed their 2021 taxes, they will not see any benefit from today's announcement. I remind the Premier and his government that not everyone will be able to receive today's supports. You need to fix the approach of this program to ensure

the most vulnerable do not slip through the cracks, yet again.

Speaker, we note there's no commitment to fully implement the entire Health Accord. There's no greater crisis in our province right now than the poor access to health care. While others are suffering, this province could've done better and could've avoided much of what we see. You need to be more attentive and co-operative, respectful and responsive to avoid a crisis before it turns into one. At this point, we have to step up our efforts and treat this crisis seriously, with urgent action and new approaches. The Health Accord contains solid recommendations. We note how fast virtual care was set up after COVID hit. Positive changes can happen quickly if the will is there.

Mr. Speaker, in my own District of Conception Bay South we are in desperate need of family doctors, as are a lot of other areas in the province. We're in desperate need of health services, like in a lot of other areas of the province. I got a population of 27,000, plus surrounding areas. We're pushing almost 40,000 people and we got two private blood collection clinics. That is all.

Does that deal with that issue in CBS? No, of course not. We need some more action in CBS and right across the province. That's the glaring example of the gaps in our health care system. All of my residents that are up there that are suffering, you know where the end up? They end up over in our emergencies room, when they're open. So I think the government needs to start paying more attention to that. This is a very, very serious issue.

Speaker, we'll spend this sitting doing our job by holding government to account and raising issues that we believe need more attention. For example, we will not let up while people are denied health care. We will need to find and keep doctors. We need a plan to pay nurse practitioners. We need to

address the concerns of nurses. We need more front-line multi-disciplinary teams and a line of continuity for patients. We need to reopen our ERs and we need to shorten wait-lists for primary care and specialty care. We need to address the cost-of-living pressures which have been crushing families.

Taxes are too high, such as the unpopular sugar tax, gas tax, carbon tax – all taxes, Mr. Speaker, that are still there today. In fact, it's surprising that the Speech from the Throne did not even mention the sugar tax. Because the government are very proud of that tax. Home heat rebates are coming out; they may have been slow coming but they're coming, which is a good thing. But people are looking for that and more.

High interest rates imposed to cope with high inflation are hurting people with high debt, which includes those using credit cards to keep up with their bills. Food bank capacity will be strained this winter. People will be shivering with cold, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal government must find a way to lower the cost of living and lower the cost of necessities, such as milk.

People need jobs and fair pay. We can't bear a recession, not here. What we need is growth and investment and job opportunities, not a cooling down. We need to be gaining ground in offshore oil, fisheries and agriculture and every other sector, not losing ground we thought we gained.

The Speech from the Throne talked about industries such as fisheries, mining, forestry and agriculture sustaining the economy. The word was "sustain," but we believe that these industries can do more than sustain, they have limitless potential which should be unlocked. We need action on pay equity because fairness is a basic right.

We need action on priorities that need greater attention. Seniors need action on issues which the previous Seniors' Advocate raised, not just lip service during

Seniors' Week. Youth need access to mental health care. We need a renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy because we now know it's a major social determinant of health. We need actions for persons with disabilities, including equitable education for deaf and hard of hearing students at all levels, without people having to fight so hard for it.

Speaker, in conclusion, we, the Official Opposition, are prepared to collaborate with government when it will advance the best interests of Newfoundland and Labrador's people. We will also fulfill our duty to oppose when we must, identify weaknesses, offer alternatives and advocate for those left behind. We look forward to a very busy fall sitting, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Welcome back everyone in this new setting and hope the summer was well.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and our caucus, let me extend heartfelt condolences to King Charles and members of the Royal Family in the passing of Queen Elizabeth. For many of us, she was the only monarch we ever knew, and for members of the Royal Family, she was a beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. We wish the good health and a long reign to King Charles III.

We also take this opportunity to offer our sympathy and support to people and communities on the southwest coast of the Island devastated by post-tropical storm Fiona and are now in the process of rebuilding. Of course, we wish the interim

Leader of the Official Opposition good health and a return to the Chamber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: I hope the clapping doesn't take away from my time.

Hubert Humphrey, vice-president of the United States from 1965 to 1969, said "that the moral test of a government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."

Tommy Douglas said: "We are all in this world together and the only test of our character that matters is how we look after the least fortunate among us. How we look after each other, not how we look after ourselves. That's what really matters, I think."

Mr. Speaker, I believe this government needs to refocus its priorities so it makes better choices and better outcomes for people. Government's response to the fire in Central Newfoundland this summer and its quick response to the aftermath of the hurricane are to be commended. But it is what happens after the immediacy of the emergency has passed and the long, slow rebuilding process begins that will be the true test of government.

It is also how government carries out the more pedestrian, less glamorous essential duties; how it treats the less fortunate, those who are in the shadows of life, that speaks to the values of that government, which brings me back to priorities, choices and outcomes. Where are government's big, bold ideas we were promised?

Today, we sit in the newly restored Colonial Building, an impressive edifice and a significant part of our province's political history. The decision to spend \$15 million of provincial funds and another \$8 million of

federal funds clearly demonstrates the priority we place on preserving that part of our past. However, I can't help but think of what else we could have chosen to do with that money had government's priorities been different.

We, the province, have 120 units in our public housing stock that are in need of major repairs. They're currently sitting empty while we're facing a housing crisis. It would have cost roughly \$10.5 million to make these units livable. The people of our province must be the monument to government's values.

At recent town hall meetings I held in my district and through online feedback, I heard from constituents what was important to them: the cost of living, accessible housing, the family doctor shortage, safe neighbourhoods, basic income and poverty reduction. What was not on their list was the restoration of the Colonial Building.

With the time remaining, I'll speak about a few of the priorities we'll be bringing up in the House of Assembly this fall, starting with housing and homelessness.

This summer past for the first time as an MHA I had to help people who were sleeping in Pippy Park and in cars because they had no home and they felt safer in tents rather than in emergency shelters where their sobriety and physical safety would be threatened. Since autumn of last year, 2021, my office has noted an increase in the calls from people facing homelessness through evictions, skyrocketing rents and an increasing difficulty in finding places for them to live. For September alone, we received 22 calls regarding complex housing needs – still not solved – some from across this province. There are many other organizations trying to stem the tsunami as well.

The numbers from Iris Kirby House for April to the end of September are staggering: 73 admissions, 24 of those who are family

admissions; 211 turn aways; and 527 distress calls. Admissions are having longer stays at the shelter because of long waits for subsidized housing, lack of rental options, high rental rates and heightened barriers for suitable rentals. The longer the stays at the shelter, the less capacity the organization has to accommodate women and families needing shelter. How many of these turn aways and distress calls were women who were forced to stay in abusive relationships or in dangerous environments because they had nowhere else to live?

In Labrador West, shelters are full and people are living rough. Even for those who have jobs it's becoming increasingly difficult to afford a house, assuming they can find a house available. It makes it difficult for the area to recruit and retain workers.

In Torngat Mountains, with the hefty price of a building lot at around \$300,000, the cost of building a new home is already prohibitively high. Less than a year ago in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Jonathon Karpik and Frederica Benuen, both of whom were homeless, froze to death outside of emergency shelters. Ukrainian newcomers who had a social event hosted by the Knights of Columbus this summer told me that many people are still living in hotel rooms.

Home ownership is also intertwined with food insecurity. According to the PROOF report on household food insecurity in Canada for 2021, food insecurity is much more prevalent among households who rent rather than own their own dwelling, with 25.9 per cent of renters affected to some degree by food insecurity. It's more prevalent among homeowners with a mortgage than those without. Successive governments have relied on private markets to solve the housing crisis. It hasn't worked. It has gotten worse. We need to make public housing a priority across the province.

So what's the solution? The National Housing Strategy is a \$270-million 10-year strategy to address supply; however, the strategy is back loaded for the last three years to do builds. We need these new builds now. Our priority would be to work with the federal government to unlock these funds now to get these new homes built.

The backlog of cases with Residential Tenancies Board also creates pressure on housing availability and must be cleared up. The backlog is several months long and hurts both tenants and landlords. We would resource the dispute resolution board to ensure that we do not lose any more landlords from the private rental market. As well, we would put in place supports for tenants and landlords alike to resolve disputes and ensure those with complex needs continue to be housed.

Reaching Home is a \$1.5-million federal program that funds 18 positions through End Homelessness St. John's to keep people housed and to find shelter. End Homelessness offers another program, Supported Referrals, which spends roughly \$250,000 a year towards prevention and diversion, as well as topping up an inadequate amount of income support benefits to expedite people from a shelter into housing, all of which comes at a cost savings to government.

We would provide funding to outreach organizations that would help expand this program and help alleviate the housing crisis we are facing. There are many middle-class families and low-wage earners struggling to pay rent and for whom homeownership is a bridge too far. Co-operative housing is a solution.

We met with CHANAL, the Co-operative Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. They have funds to build new houses but need land. Government has land, several acres of it in fact, at the site of the former Grace General Hospital. It's a

great place for mixed-use affordable housing. This would be a bold idea.

Let's discuss affordability, poverty and food insecurity. While supermarket chains and corporations reaped record profits, inflation and rising costs of necessities clobbered many families. One single mother commented: I'm a single mom working two jobs, barely making ends meet. Soon enough I'll have to choose between eating and paying bills. There should be income support for working people who can't make ends meet.

I was speaking to a panhandler several weeks ago. She's on income support and receives \$190 every two weeks. That includes her dietary supplement. That's \$13.57 a day to feed herself and buy necessities. Meanwhile, we as MHAs who are on the road, we'll claim approximately \$50 a day for those expenses.

Taxing sugar-sweetened drinks under the guise of helping people make healthy choices will not help families already struggling to put food on the table to purchase healthier food. It will not. PROOF notes that about one in seven households reliant on wages, salaries or self-employment were food insecure for 2021. It concluded that households relying on social assistance had the highest prevalence of food insecurity, Speaker, at 63.1 per cent.

Now, today's announcement by the Premier of another one-time benefit of \$500 will be appreciated, I know, but we will need to put more money into the pockets of individuals to make life affordable. Yet, at times, this government seems bent on doing the opposite. Despite the recommendation of the provincial poverty groups and the federal government not to do so, our provincial government chose to claw back CERB payments dollar for dollar from recipients on income support.

The government has shown us that they do not always understand the realities of

everyday people, like Bill and Sally in their advertisement; let's put that into focus. PROOF key numbers for Newfoundland: 17.9 per cent of households in Newfoundland were food insecure, 90,000 people; 4.5 per cent of households in the province experienced severe food insecurity; 7 out of 10 households relying on social assistance were food insecure; almost half of food-insecure households in Newfoundland relied on wages, salaries or self-employment incomes as their main source; 1 in 4 children lived in food-insecure households.

Both PROOF and Health Accord NL recognize the relationship between food insecurity and poverty and its harm to people's health and the cost to our health care system. Food insecurity and poverty are two of the main social determinants of health that both PROOF and the Health Accord make clear recommendations to address.

PROOF concludes: "If the incomes of lower income households are not increased in proportion to these rising costs" of food and other basic necessities "(through indexation of the wages and benefits upon which these households depend), we can expect the prevalence of severe food insecurity to rise" – indexation.

According to the PROOF report, Quebec has the lowest prevalence of food insecurity of any province and is the only province indexing its social assistance programs and income benefits to inflation. Its child tax benefit is also higher.

Closer to home, the *Newfoundland and Labrador Minimum Wage Review Committee Report* recommended, "The annual cost-of-living adjustment to the minimum wage rate should be based on the provincial rather than the national CPI." We have to end a legislated poverty wage and we've got to act more quickly.

During the spring budget debate, we called on the province to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and offset the costs to small businesses with a significant tax break. As it is, the minimum wage workers will have to wait until a year from now to make that mark, at which time the living wage needed to live will be \$20 and they will have little to do to protect them from soaring inflation now.

During the pandemic, the government praised front-line workers as essential to the economy and placed them on pedestals. Now, it seems the government is determined to knock them off that pedestal.

The Premier has promised to bring some reform of pay equity legislation during this sitting; details are sketchy. Pay equity is a good thing and it would certainly help with the cost of living. However, based on information in an ATIPP report, we are not confident about the Liberal government's commitment to pay equity, and we'll be pushing for it. Then there is the concept of a guaranteed livable basic income. The Health Accord supports the provision of a basic income.

This Monday past at a St. John's city council meeting, councillors unanimously passed a motion by Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary confirming council's support for the concept of a guaranteed livable income and called upon the province to establish the all-party Committee as approved in November 2021. Just as a reminder, that all-party Committee, that motion, the one that she is referring to, is a unanimously adopted private Member's resolution that we put forward to strike that all-party Committee on guaranteed basic income, not once, but twice.

Now, we were beginning to despair that the government had no intention of striking that Committee and was merely paying lip service to the idea. That is until last Thursday at the summit on GBI where the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social

Development was the lunchtime speaker and said that the only thing holding up the Committee was the concurrence of the three House Leaders. Truly disheartening to hear.

Well, we in the NDP caucus stand ready. I assume that the Conservative House Leader remains committed to the process. It just remains for the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, as the Government House Leader, to give the go ahead. So what do you say we roll up our sleeves, strike the Committee and let's get down to work, get cracking at this?

Of course, we can't talk about priorities without talking about our universally accessible publicly funded health care and the crisis we have witnessed unfold over the past few months. Now, the Health Accord report lays out a long-term plan. However, we still have to make sure that people are able to access timely medical care now. Lack of family physicians, closure of emergency rooms – tune into any media coverage and it is clear there is a crisis. People are deeply concerned and angry. More importantly, they want something done.

This we heard at our town hall meetings. One person said that the most important thing you could help me with is obtaining a family doctor for myself and my family. I've been without one for months, despite being on the 811 and Eastern Health wait-list. Another person echoed the sentiment: I've been waiting two years with the collaborative health clinic to see a doctor. Another person said that he registered in January and by August he still hadn't heard back.

If this is a human resource issue, then hire the staff needed to help so people are contacted in a timely manner, that confidence is maintained in the public health care system and to ensure that emergency rooms do not become the default for routine health issues.

One person at the town hall said it best: We feel let down by the government and we're scared. It's a problem nationally, yes, but it should not stop us from solving this issue. Let's be bold and innovating.

Now, we know that there has been a plethora of announcements designed to address these human resource deficits. But let's be clear, this crisis did not just happen overnight, it has been building for decades and over several administrations. Several successive administrations have ignored the warnings of health professionals in the system.

Our public health care system and our citizens have been sacrificed on the altar of zero-based budgeting and fiscal efficiency and has led to more costly reactive measures. The cyber attack on our medical records and the more recent issues affecting mammography results are two recent examples of that. They have undermined the confidence in the public health care system and have created the unnecessary anxiety in the patients who depend on this system.

Our Party called for a comprehensive human resources review, Mr. Speaker, a year ago. Nurses and health care workers have been calling for it much longer and it's only now that the system is in crisis that government is finally acting. But let's be proactive from here on in, shall we? The government must commit to doing what it takes to protect our publicly funded, universally accessible public health care system. That means no privatization, invest in people, invest in the systems that serve them and invest in the personnel needed to make those systems work.

If anything I've heard in the Throne Speech is a commitment to this, we will support this. Let's get the collaborative team clinics up and running so that all people have access to primary health care, to resourcing virtual emergency rooms and establishing a robust provincial ambulance system that leaves no

one without emergency care. It's going to require an investment, especially in human resources.

Mr. Speaker, both thinking-outside-the-box solutions have become empty political rhetoric and the question where will we get the money to pay for this has become the lazy excuse for inaction. However, if government is to pass the moral test Hubert Humphrey spoke of, if we are to meet the test of character to look after the less fortunate and achieve a better future, then government will need to make better decisions. That means focusing its priorities to put people of this province first and foremost.

I say to my colleagues across the House, in the words of Tommy Douglas: "Courage, my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world."

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to be here in this historic building, the Colonial Building, to begin our fall session with fellow Members of the House of Assembly. Let me extend my gratitude to the former governments and some Members from across the House for this initiative in 2011, recognizing how important our history is, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: This is a historic moment. First opened in 1850, this building is steeped in the memories of our elected and appointed representatives to both Chambers, the Legislative Counsel and the House of Assembly.

Many stories of our deep political history have been told. Debates, fierce battles on these grounds, even controversy at times. With damaging fires to the ceilings to celebratory events, this physical structure also holds the memories and spirits of the past.

As you can see from touring this beautiful property, the facility has been restored in an impeccable manner and the original paint and designs have been revealed for all to see. Now the untold and often under told history of Newfoundland and Labrador is represented within these walls as well, particularly our Indigenous cultures, and I thank the Indigenous leaders and all those involved in helping us share them.

The Colonial Building is an exceptional place, Mr. Speaker. I encourage all Members and the public to take opportunity to explore it yourself. In fact, today represents an even more historic day. Her Honour – and I need to thank Her Honour for delivering the Speech from the Throne. The first time a woman has delivered it in this House, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Today we sit here, many before us, engaged in healthy discourse. It is where a large portion of the foundation of our democracy was created. Mr. Speaker, it happened within these walls.

I want to congratulate and thank all of those who have worked on the extensive renovations of this building and the important process of revitalization. I think the awe-inspiring work here speaks for itself.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate our solemn gratitude to the life and service of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and welcome His Royal Highness King Charles III ascension to the throne. King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla have just visited our province, of course, to celebrate the

platinum jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and I know the King has a keen interest and affection for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Most recently, of course, he sent his well wishes to the people of Atlantic Canada as we experienced one of the worst storms recorded in Canadian history. Hurricane Fiona had a devastating impact on the people of the South West Coast – family homes, fishing stages, all destroyed in the path of this storm. We continue to keep the people of these areas in our thoughts and prayers as they continue with the hard work of cleanup.

We also, of course, think of the family of the woman who lost her life during that storm. We know that it's a difficult time for them, but please know that we are all thinking of you across our province.

I thank also, Mr. Speaker, the volunteers, community groups, community leaders, Armed Forces, federal government employees, generous supporters and everyone involved in this disaster relief. You have all stepped up to help your friends, strangers, neighbours and communities, and that is a true display of the spirit of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to wish the Leader of the Opposition a speedy and full recovery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, as highlighted in the Speech from the Throne, this government has taken a number of steps to address the rising cost of living. We know Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are struggling with these pressures, as I'm sure all of us MHAs are hearing those pressures from our constituents.

We have already taken a number of steps to address the strains of the rising cost of

living. As indicated, we will continue to be there for them responsibly, in this time of hurt and need. The newly announced direct payment of \$500 for adults whose income is less than \$100,000 and a sliding amount for those whose income is up to \$125,000 will provide direct assistance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador right now, Mr. Speaker.

This money is money that families can use how they see best fit for them. I told the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we would be there to find ways for them in times of need, and we are delivering on that today. Of course, this one-time additional relief comes as our government continues to be fully committed to balancing the budget and paying down our long-term debt, while creating, investing and growing our economy for the future. This initiative is in addition to those highlighted in the Speech from the Throne that this government has announced over the past year: temporarily lowering taxes on fuel, increasing supplement for seniors, more benefits for the most affected, reducing vehicle registration costs and so much more.

Since March of 2022, our government has announced more than a half a billion dollars in targeting cost-of-living measures throughout our province. This government will continue to work hard for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, despite the fact that many of these pressures are beyond our control.

That hard work, Mr. Speaker, also includes, of course, investing in health care and improving the system for the people of the province. We know that people are dealing with a troubled health care system; a health care system that has undergone major stress and strain. The pandemic and the cyberattack highlighted many of the issues and put extra strain on the hard-working front-line women and men in that system. I want to first thank our health care professionals who do all they can to continue to provide top-notch, world-

standard care to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want them to know that we are doing everything we can to improve the workplace and create an environment to deliver the best care in a timely fashion to all patients in our province. I want the patients to know that we're doing everything we can to improve access and results within the health care system.

The Speech from the Throne highlights a number of recruitment and retention and improvement initiatives that we have launched to address health care in this province. All of these measures are working towards the goal of making improvements to the system: community-based clinics, incentive for family doctors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, addressing the backlog for hip and joint replacements, cardiac surgeries, increasing mental health supports, more supports for paramedicine and the list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. We are leaving no rock unturned and no hill unclimbed.

This government is taking all necessary steps to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the care they need and the care they deserve.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Health Accord NL recognized that the challenges we face in our system, looking at the whole system, including how socio-economic status affects Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It takes a fulsome approach to recommending ways to improve the social determinants of health in order to improve our overall health.

Mr. Speaker, I have said it before, the status quo is not working. We know the outdated system needs change to face the challenges of today. The province 60 years ago, for which this system was designed, is not the same province of today. So we have to evolve, develop and grow a system that

works for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador today.

With our latest incentives for Come Home 2022 to bring health care professionals with a connection to Newfoundland and Labrador back to our province, we are becoming the most competitive place in the country to work in the health care field. We want to make sure our health care workers get the tools they need to provide good quality care to our patients, and we want the patients to feel they are receiving that care in a timely fashion. We will continue to address the health care concerns in Newfoundland and Labrador with the utmost respect and importance.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, pay equity and the Future Fund will be a top priority for this government. Pay equity is about supporting women and gender-diverse people who face inequality in the workplace. We want people to know that we hear you and we will act to provide a better environment for you to work in and an equal playing field with respect to the rest of your colleagues.

The Future Fund will also provide an opportunity to invest revenues so that our children and grandchildren can have available resources to be prepared for any challenges that they may face. This is about being prepared for the future before it arrives.

Fiscal responsibility is important for this government, Mr. Speaker. We do not want to leave a burden on those who will come after us and sit in these chairs in this Chamber. So having a balanced budget and this important fund will help us do just that. Our government is committed to making responsible decisions for the benefit of all Newfoundland and Labrador with a view to its past, its present and its future.

There are many other items, Mr. Speaker, mentioned in the Speech from the Throne that set the tone for this government going forward. A tone that lets people of the

province know that no matter the circumstances, no matter the challenges, no matter the hardships, we are there for you. We will be there to support you.

We're also there to welcome and support newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador. We did so last year, not only meeting but exceeding our targets. Mr. Speaker, this past year our population actually grew for the first time since 1972.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: This was evident in a growing student population for the first time in four decades, an extra 500 students enrolled in the K-to-12 system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: We have set aggressive immigration targets that will triple by 2026. An additional 5,100 people each year, Mr. Speaker, is like adding a Marystown or two Springdales each and every year.

From immigration, seniors, infrastructure, the economy, health care and so much more, this government will be there to invest in the people of the province. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues across the aisle, as we have in many debates in the past, all in good discourse and the interest in true democracy and arriving at the right decision. I'm sure it will be healthy, I'm sure it will be robust and I'm sure it will be what Newfoundland and Labrador deserves.

Because, Mr. Speaker, this government ran on building a bright future for Newfoundland and Labrador and I continue to make that a commitment every single day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that a Select Committee be struck to draft an Address of Thanks to be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in reply to the gracious Speech from the Throne which she has been pleased to open this session of the House of Assembly. The Members of the Select Committee will be the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, the Member for Mount Pearl North and the Member for Exploits.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

I declare this motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Notices of Motion, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the following Humble Address be presented to His Most Gracious Majesty the King, expressing the heartfelt sympathy of this House on the death of Her Late Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, and also conveying to His Majesty the happiness felt by the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador upon his accession to the Throne:

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY:

Most Gracious Sovereign:

We, Your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador in Legislative session convened, humbly beg leave to approach Your Majesty to express the profound sorrow felt by this House and by the loyal people of this province with Your Majesty and all the other members of the Royal Family, at the irreparable loss sustained by you and them in the death of our Late Beloved Sovereign Queen Elizabeth the Second.

We mourn keenly the death of our Revered Queen, whose deep sense of responsibility, whose devotion to the duties of Her High Office, and whose wise and sympathetic leadership we acknowledge with profound gratitude. We pray that Almighty God may abundantly comfort Your Majesty and the Royal Family in your grief.

With feelings different but very deep and sincere, we now hail Your Majesty's accession to the Throne. We express the fervent hope that Your Majesty's reign will continue for many peaceful and prosperous years.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Address be engrossed and sent to the Governor General of Canada to be forwarded to His Majesty the King.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will move the following: That the House resolve into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a resolution for the granting of Supply to His Majesty, Bill 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act, Bill 3.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, Balanced Budget Act, Bill 4.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, Future Fund Act, Bill 5.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, Bill 6.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997, Bill 7.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009, Bill 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, Bill 9.

SPEAKER: And you can continue on, Sir.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Wildlife Act, Bill 10.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, Winding Up of Judgment Recovery (NFLD) Ltd. Act, Bill 11.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, Bill 12.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, Bill 13.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Trading Act, 2019, Bill 14.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, Fairness Registration Practices Act, Bill 15.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 2, Bill 16.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, Aquaculture Act, 2022, Bill 17.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 6, 2022.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the 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.'

Motion carried.

Before we finish up, I just want to remind all Members that we will be having a group photo at the front steps of this building when we leave.

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