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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

I'd like to begin by welcoming the public to our public gallery.

### **Statements by Members**

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Exploits, Ferryland, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Harbour Main and Humber - Bay of Islands.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

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

Today I would like to recognize the volunteer efforts of John and Wayne Rowsell of Leading Ticks. John has served 43 years with the fire department; 30 of those as fire chief.

John was instrumental in growing the fire department in both members and equipment. He spent a lot of his time also educating the community on fire safety and preventative maintenance. His brother Wayne has been with the department for 30 years, with 23 of those as treasurer.

Speaker, during the community civic event each year, the brothers were deeply involved in raising money for the department, which usually resulted in \$30,000 to \$35,000 raised each year for their local department.

This year both John and Wayne have retired from their positions but remain involved as members.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking John and Wayne for their years of dedicated service.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise today to honour a great lady from my district, Shirley Barnable, that has recognized as a lifetime Honourary Member for her contributions to the 4-H movement in Canada. The prestigious 4-H Canada Honourary Membership is bestowed upon individuals who have been dedicated and passionate contributors to the 4-H movement in Canada.

Shirley joined the local 4-H club in Ferryland at a young age and later took on the role of president of the club before graduating from the program. Shirley then continued her involvement as a volunteer leader for 20 years in the iSullivan 4-H club.

Shirley played an active role in executive changes in the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial 4-H organization and was elected as co-chair of the provincial council. Shirley also became chair for the 4-H Newfoundland and Labrador and, in this capacity, helped advance the 4-H movement across Canada through her involvement with national committees, advising strategic planning and helping develop national programs and resources.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Shirley Barnable on receiving such a great award and her dedication and long-time involvement in the 4-H club of Canada and as well right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise to honour a group that I'm very proud of: the Exploits Hurricanes. This past weekend Grand Falls-Windsor hosted the 2023 Special Olympics Winter Games where over 350 athletes gave it their all.

With the help of many volunteers, coaches and parents, as well as organizers from the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, in particular Todd Mercer, director of Community Services, it was a complete success.

Athlete Liam Gibbons, Exploits Hurricanes, had an exceptional two days of competition in five-pin bowling. Liam bowled two perfect games in one day, which is almost unheard of, entering him into the 900 Club. Liam earned two individual gold medals for his accomplishments, top male in his division and top male overall from the competition. His team also took home the gold medal.

Also competing this year was gold medalist Melvin Hanhams who, on top of being an exceptional bowler, will go on to represent Canada this summer at the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin for golf.

I am so proud of all the athletes from the Exploits Hurricanes as they work hard each and every year to give it their very best. Go Hurricanes go.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Today I recognize the Holyrood Heritage Society Museum, Art Gallery and Gift Shop, which is located in the heart of Holyrood in the District of Harbour Main.

Exquisitely laid out, this museum has 11 exhibition rooms, which gives us a glimpse of the resilience and life of the people of Holyrood and surrounding areas. The artifacts have been donated by residents of the Conception Bay region and from around the province. A special feature of the museum is it supports the local artists of the area by displaying and selling their artwork, crafts and books.

The museum's second floor is now under construction to create a space for workshops so that classes can be provided in the arts. It is the hope that this will generate income for the museum so that it can become self-sufficient. This space will also have room for the work of gifted artist and long-time resident of Holyrood, the late Gerald Squires.

Recently, I toured the museum and was so impressed by the incredible work of the Holyrood Heritage Society and its volunteers. Please join me in commending this dedicated group of individuals for their commitment to promoting the arts and history of our beautiful province.

Thank you.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** On February 11, the people of Lark Harbour and York Harbour came together in true community spirit to support a courageous, inspirational young man, Ryder Walters, and his family.

Ryder, a Grade 10 student at St. James All Grade, is currently receiving treatment for cancer here in St. John's. A local band, Route 450, wanted to do a fundraiser for their friend and approached the school principal, Penny Sheppard. This was the start of an outpouring of love, support and generosity of communities coming together. A benefit concert was organized which also

included a bake sale, 50/50 tickets, tickets on a basket, online auction, canteen services and individuals who started their own fundraisers. The fundraiser was an overwhelming success with the final tally being \$23,961.75.

Ryder had a week off between treatments and was able to come home to be with his family, friends and his community for the event. He even joined the band on stage to play a couple of tunes.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating everybody who was a part of this great event and wish Ryder the very best as he faces this challenge in life with such courage. You're an inspiration, Ryder.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### **Statements by Ministers**

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, one year ago we launched an urgent humanitarian mission to offer safe haven to Ukrainians facing the global threat of Russian aggression.

A provincial government team was dispatched to Poland to meet Ukrainians fleeing the war and extend opportunity of shelter on our shores.

This selfless work led to not one, but four Government of Newfoundland and Labrador-sponsored airlifts, bringing more than 700 Ukrainians to safety.

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

**A. FUREY:** An additional 1,600 Ukrainians have arrived independently to join a flourishing community within a community of over 2,300 Ukrainians living in our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, last week, I joined our team in Poland and met with many Ukrainians. I can report back to this hon. House that our province, our home continues to be a desired home for others. Meetings also occurred with Polish officials and the Canadian ambassador to Poland, where I thanked them for assisting us with our mission and for the incredible work they are doing to serve humanity.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can take pride that their support made all this possible. They opened their hearts, their homes so that families can take refuge from the ravages of war and become a part of a vibrant community that we call home.

Ukrainian history is now our history, our support is unwavering.

Slava Ukraini!

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative Official Opposition I welcome all Ukrainians to our province. I also thank the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including the Association for New Canadians who assisted Ukrainian families with essential goods and supplies and helped them to find jobs and become part of our communities.

We must do more to assist Ukrainians, especially those who are struggling to find

appropriate and affordable housing. Having families live in hotels is just not appropriate for a long-term solution.

Welcome to our beautiful province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. The NDP joins in his comments with regards to his continued support for the Ukraine. However, it's critical that we support the people of Ukraine and all those fleeing tyranny. The government must ensure that resources are in place to do so. However, we continue to fall short on ensuring housing stock, access to dental care and child care spaces are available, as well as adequate supports in schools receiving newcomers.

We remind government that without these supports we will not retain Ukrainians or Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who will look elsewhere to build their futures.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health said he would hire doctors if he could find them. This morning on the steps of Confederation Building, I spoke with a

doctor who wants to work in this province except the Premier's office is not calling him back. So he will soon have to go elsewhere to work.

After giving his personal commitment, why is the Premier letting doctors move away without hiring them in Newfoundland and Labrador?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

We tried to phone – I think without using names – that individual back. The HR issues are complex. They are not as straightforward as they often appear, but we're always open to have conversations with the health authority and with doctors who we want to work in our institutions, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, you're the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. Complexity is the way you're supposed to solve some issues here and make sure that we have access to health care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, this isn't a one-off. I've now heard from four doctors who want to work in this province but the Liberals are not helping.

Why do the Liberals give excuses instead of making job offers?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

We're happy to make job offers where there are jobs available within the health care

system, Mr. Speaker. As the Member opposite knows, not every doctor is the same. A neurosurgeon is not the same as a family practitioner is not the same as an endocrinologist is not the same as a nuclear medicine doctor, Mr. Speaker, so the complexities are real. They're not as straightforward as often presented.

That said, we have put together a healthy incentive package for doctors, Mr. Speaker, whether that's primary care physicians or those in other areas of need. The Minister of Health can speak to that, but it's a long list of incentives including over \$150,000 available to recruit primary care physicians to our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** I would suggest if you have a comprehensive package that you start offering it to doctors and nurses because we have a shortage of 200 doctors and over 700 nurses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** The closure of the Whitbourne ER impacts many people, not just those who live in Whitbourne. It impacts residents of the District of Placentia West - Bellevue, Harbour Main, Placentia - St. Mary's, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. Again, today, residents of the area are protesting outside. Instead of reopening the emergency room, the Liberals announced a downgrading of services.

Yes or no, Mr. Premier: Will the Premier reopen the emergency room in Whitbourne?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we've announced is the opening of the centre that has been closed for eight months and on diversion for several months prior to that. What we've announced, Mr. Speaker, is starting three days a week this week the centre is now open. We will continue to recruit to expand that to five days a week, then to seven days a week, 12 hours a day and then into the evenings.

We have committed, Mr. Speaker, to continue expanding that facility as the demand requires and as we are able to recruit individuals.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, another example of a reactive process here than a proactive process here.

Speaker, Members of the PC Official Opposition stood with the people of Whitbourne and surrounding areas as they call for an emergency room to be reopened. The Whitbourne clinic is only open for urgent care eight hours a day, three days a week. This is not 24-hour emergency care.

When will emergency care be available 24 hours a day every day in Whitbourne?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So as I just indicated, we will continue recruiting and continue recruiting and continue recruiting and expanding the number of hours at that facility as we are able to recruit. We've opened that after eight months of being closed completely, it is now opened three days a week. We've taken a proactive approach to try to get that facility open because the scope of practice for emergency department is different than the scope of practice for urgent care. So

we've moved to urgent care in the short term while we are able to recruit and have that facility open, with the promise of continuing to recruit and put more and more hours into that facility.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

If it took a year to get to where you are now, I don't have a lot of faith that you're going to get to somewhere where 24-hour-a-day service is going to be provided to the emergency room in Whitbourne.

The clinic is open for urgent care only, not emergency care. Residents are asking for emergency care. Residents deserve emergency care continuously. The fire chief in Whitbourne said – and I quote – if Nan or Pop get a chest pain at 7 in the evening, they're that much further from an emergency room.

I ask the Premier: What do you say to the fire chief in Whitbourne?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

Let me take an opportunity to address the anxiety that I'm sure many are feeling with respect to their clinic in Whitbourne.

As the minister stated, the urgent care centre is a way to address the anxieties that they're feeling currently, with a plan to open it continuously long term. This is the first step. It's using technology to ensure that we are opening the doors, that the doors aren't shuttered. It's ultimately to protect the institution, not to shutter it, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, residents in the area are very concerned about what's happened, if they show up in an urgent care clinic in the middle of a medical emergency.

What happens if someone shows up at the Whitbourne clinic with symptoms of a heart attack or a stroke?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things that I can say to that. Eastern Health now are providing two ambulances out in the area. One of those is equipped with an ACP who can certainly help address in the immediate term to stabilize a patient. If somebody has a life-threatening cardiac event, Mr. Speaker, the best place, at the moment, is to get them to the Health Sciences complex where they can be appropriately dealt with in the short term. We are working at getting more and more hours in that clinic in the long term, Mr. Speaker.

We have the doors open this week, which is something we strive to do. There will be more and more hours added as we are able to recruit additional individuals.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Whenever you have an emergency, particularly a health one, you want to have a physician automatically ready to assess what's happening and then assess what your intervention should be, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said hours will be extended when additional staff are recruited. How

many doctors are now working at the Whitbourne clinic?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding is there are two physicians working at the Whitbourne clinic providing primary care. The plan is to recruit additional physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, practical nurses, as well as other staff that are required in the area to have that facility providing comprehensive care to the individuals living in the area.

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

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

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

Speaker, our caucus continues to hear daily from parents around the province around the issue of child care spaces. Affordability does not help, Speaker, when there's no availability. I'm aware of one family who has been on a wait-list since 2019.

So I ask the minister: Where are the 6,000 spaces you were going to create?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question, Speaker.

Access to affordable child care is important to all of us. It enables children to have early learning experience and parents to return to the workforce. We have increased the graduate numbers at CNA's program for early childhood educators by five-fold in the last three years.

The problem is not so much space; it is getting ECEs into the workforce. We have increased the number of graduates. We

have an incentive package with a wage grid which is forthcoming to lure back those 600 to 800 ECEs who left the profession. That is where we're starting. We have 700 more places this year than we had last.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** And they're three months behind on the wage grid that the former minister committed to in last Estimates that would be out in January, but government likes to have budget announcements so they're pushing it to April, all while we're dealing with a child care crisis. You call that good governance? I don't.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the brand new child care centre in Happy Valley-Goose Bay can only accept 12 children into 60 spaces because of a lack of early childhood educators. Yet again, we see this administration failing to recruit the professionals they promised, like the minister just went on about.

How many early childhood educators are being trained in Newfoundland and Labrador today?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to address comment in the preamble. The biggest single recruitment tool for early childhood educators is the wage grid. There will be a retroactive payment to the first of January, as promised. The operators of these daycare centres, which are private centres, asked for more time so the wage grid could be developed and implemented.



It will be out on the 1st of April, with retroactive payments to January 1.

There are 245 graduates from CNA's program expected this June. I do not have the figure yet for private ones. That's a start. It's a five-fold increase in three years.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, that's news to child care operators out there. They didn't ask for time; they asked for a wage grid. They talked to his officials and they were asked, what do you think? They asked the child care operators what they thought. Government asked them what they thought last month, yet they announced then later they're going to have the grid out in another couple of weeks' time.

They're floored and the minister's comments are misleading. I have to be honest; they're misleading the people of this House and the province. I heard him yesterday and I heard him again today.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Ooh.

**B. PETTEN:** You can ooh all you want; I've talked to the people and maybe the minister should.

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

**B. PETTEN:** It's sickening, Speaker.

Speaker, to help deal with the crisis in early childhood education, the minister's committed to a new pay grid effective January 1, like he just said. That was over two months ago when we heard this. The staff are still waiting for this recruitment and retention incentive while the operators are not being consulted. I repeat, they've not

been consulted when asked for suggestions.

**SPEAKER:** Move on with your question.

**B. PETTEN:** That's not what I call consultation.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

Again, with the preamble, I would take issue. I am not here misleading the House. That gentleman opposite has put words in my mouth and distorted the facts as they are known widely and as they have been presented.

We have a working group with representatives of publicly delivered, not-for-profit and private daycares. How that individual and those individuals communicate with their members is their business. They come to that committee as representatives of those various sectors. They have been actively involved in the wage grid and, indeed, AECENL and groups like that were involved in coming forward to produce the wage grid.

I think the Member opposite owes an apology to this House.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the minister opposite owes an apology to this province.

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

**B. PETTEN:** All you got to do is look back at his last portfolio. He owes an apology to the province. Don't go lecturing me in this House, Sir. Don't you lecture me.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Move on with the question.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Direct your comments to the Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You should do the same.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Move on with your question, please.

**B. PETTEN:** The same applies on both sides, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** It does.

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, our caucus has heard from many nurses and other health care professionals who routinely work 12-hour shifts and longer but cannot find child care. Many individuals, predominantly women, cannot go back to work because they cannot find child care.

Again, what is the government doing to remove the barriers for our health care workers and parents who wish to return to work?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

Just to dial the temperature down a little bit and inject a little bit of clarity and a few facts. There are significant child care space shortages across Canada; the principal problem is recruitment of early childhood educators.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. HAGGIE:** We have in place a wage grid which will deliver; it is competitive with other jurisdictions. With regard to health care workers, we have had discussions with

regional health authorities and with the transition team for the new provincial health authority to co-locate child care in health care facilities to make that accessibility problem a lot easier.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Speaker, on Friday it was announced that the emergency services at the St. Lawrence health care facility would be on diversion for a full two weeks.

I ask the minister: Will the Burin Peninsula lose their ER as has Whitbourne?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** No.

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

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

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

New-Wes-Valley's ER has been temporarily closed.

I ask the minister: Will this ER be the next to be downgraded to urgent care, like Whitbourne?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** No.

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

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

Baie Verte Peninsula health care will be closed Thursday and Friday.

I ask the minister: Will the Baie Verte Peninsula lose their ER the same way the people of Whitbourne have?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** The people of Whitbourne haven't lost their centre, Mr. Speaker. We've got the doors open three days a week. We're going to continue to recruit until we get it open five days a week, then seven days a week and then into the evening hours.

I have indicated that already to the Member; he has chosen to ignore those facts, Mr. Speaker. Baie Verte will not be losing their emergency department.

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

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

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

Urgent care and emergency care are two different things. Right now, Whitbourne does not have emergency services.

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

**P. DINN:** Yesterday it was announced that emergency services on the Connaigre Peninsula health care would be on diversion.

I ask the minister: Can the people of the Connaigre Peninsula expect the same downgrade of service as Whitbourne?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I don't subscribe to the all-or-nothing process that the Member opposite subscribes to. We are

working to get services back in Whitbourne. Mr. Speaker, we are working to recruit individuals to Whitbourne to get the doors open more days and more hours and we will continue to do that.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

**J. DWYER:** The residents of Long Harbour, Chapel Arm, Norman's Cove, Long Cove, Thornlea, Fairhaven, Bellevue, Bellevue Beach, Chance Cove and other communities in my district rely on the Whitbourne clinic for their emergency needs.

How does the minister justify forcing people to drive longer distances for emergency care?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, last week there was no clinic open; this week they're open three days a week. Again, I'm not sure if the Members opposite are suggesting that we don't do anything until we're able to fully restore the clinic 24 hours a day, or if the process that we've taken to at least get it open three days a week, with the plan to move to five and then to move to seven and then into the evening hours, is better.

At least we're getting the clinic open, Mr. Speaker. We are determined to continue to recruit to get more and more hours and more days of that clinic open.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

**J. DWYER:** Well, it sounds to me like they're – with this problem being created, three days a week, you have to pick which days you're going to get sick.

With overflowing and long wait-lists in emergency rooms on the Avalon, why is the minister okay with removing emergency services in Whitbourne?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we are determined to continue to open the facility in Whitbourne more days and more hours than are currently there. There are three more days open this week than there was last week. That's on a permanent basis. As we're able to recruit more people and get the facility open more days and more hours, that is what we're going to do.

I ask the Member again, would he rather be last week or this week, because this week has three more days on a permanent basis open than last week did.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, the president of NAPE said the situation involving paramedics in Whitbourne is – and I quote – a fiasco. Eastern Health announced that paramedics will be filling the gap in health care service.

I ask the minister: How many red alerts has the new larger Eastern Health ambulance region experienced over the last year?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have those numbers in front of me, but I'd certainly be happy to get them for the Member opposite. I would ask the Member, as well, if being advised by Eastern Health and by the department that there were issues of safety for the residents in the area with the current operator, would he keep that current operation going? Or would he

take the advice of the professionals at Eastern Health and the department in the best interests of the people in the area?

Eastern Health have provided two ambulances in the area with PCPs and ACPs, Mr. Speaker. The service continues in the area provided by Eastern Health.

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

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

**J. WALL:** I believe it was one ACP in the area, Speaker.

An Eastern Health ambulance will now respond to an emergency in the Whitbourne area, in addition to an emergency in Pouch Cove or up on the Southern Shore.

With a larger region and a lack of staff, does the minister believe Eastern Health paramedics will be stretched too thin to provide proper coverage to the residents of the area?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Eastern Health ambulances will be stationed in Whitbourne. They won't be travelling from Pouch Cove to Whitbourne or from Whitbourne to the Southern Shore, Mr. Speaker, unless it's a mutual aid call, of course.

We are determined to ensure that the people of the Whitbourne area have the ambulance coverage that they need. The ambulance coverage being provided now by Eastern Health is certainly in place in the area, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the needs of the area, with PCPs and ACPs able to also help with the urgent care clinic that's in the area.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I've heard from many seniors and families in my district, and my colleagues have heard from people all around the province who are waiting for their home heating rebate from this past winter.

How many people are awaiting rebates and when will they finally receive them?

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

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

This is an important program and we have had about 28,000 applications. I will say to the Member opposite, about 80 per cent of those have received their rebate. There are some that we're awaiting further information, either they inadvertently didn't sign the application, didn't provide the necessary information. We're working through those applications to make sure that we can get the cheque out as quickly as possible.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** So we've got 20 per cent that are still waiting.

The people of the province, I think as we agreed yesterday and we discussed, are suffering under high home heating fuel bills. A cost that will continue to rise because of the Liberal carbon tax.

Will the minister commit to continuing the home heating rebate program in this upcoming budget?

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

**S. COADY:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I will say that the carbon tax is a federal tax.

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

**S. COADY:** It has nothing to do with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Now, I will say –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address this House.

I will say to the Member opposite that the cost-of-living concerns; we provided almost \$500 million to the people of the province, an astronomical amount of money back to the people of the province to help with the cost of living. It is something that we're mindful of for this upcoming budget, but he will have to wait until next Thursday, March 23, to hear what the budget contains.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** It's always nice to hear what we input out, but we do realize that there are still a lot of seniors and people in our province who are hurting at this time.

The Liberal carbon tax, well, I've mentioned federal, but they stood in the last sitting of the House and defended it as well. This is why we hear some of the voices from this side.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**C. PARDY:** The Liberal carbon tax will cause home heating fuel to rise once again. Many seniors who are currently struggling on fixed incomes don't have the ability to switch to electric heat.

What does the minister plan to do to lower the cost of home heating fuel in this province?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I'm going to say it again, I don't know how many times we have to say it in this House. The carbon tax is a federal tax.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** I hear the Members –

**SPEAKER:** I heard the question; I want to hear the response.

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

**S. COADY:** This province did have a number of exemptions that we were able to negotiate with the federal government. As the Members opposite know and the people of the province know, the federal backstop will be imposed this year.

For clarity and certainty, the federal carbon tax is just that. It is a matter for the federal government. He should ask his federal counterparts and colleagues, Pierre Poilievre in particular.

Speaker, I will say that we do recognize the challenges that are being faced in this province in the cost of living, and we will always be concerned –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, NAPE has released a scathing condemnation of working conditions in correctional facilities around the province. Twenty-four hour shifts, mandatory overtime and cancelled holidays are the norm, not the exception.

How is government going to stabilize the workforce in our prisons?

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

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

I thank NAPE for their efforts in working through that report. I look forward to reading it in detail. But at the same time I did meet personally with NAPE and individuals that work at HMP, the COs, to discuss the working conditions that they down there. It was a very great meeting. We agreed to continue to work together to come up with creative and innovative solutions that will help the staffing conditions down there and increase recruitment and retention issues for HMP, because we know it is difficult for the inmates there as we work through educational programs to get them rehabilitated and back into society.

But, of course, people work down there 24-7 and we need to look after them as well. We recognize that and that's why we met with them and agreed to work together going forward.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** The impact not only on the workers but also the inmates is profound. We need to know what is going to happen here to stabilize this workforce.

Inmates have spoken to me about cancelled visitations, cancelled recreation time and cancelled programming. Again, this is all directly related to staff shortages.

When is the government going to release a plan to deal with this crisis? This should already have been looked at, not just as a result of NAPE's condemnation.

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

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

I'm happy to report, since May 2021 we've hired an additional 26 correctional workers to work at corrections throughout the province.

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

**J. HOGAN:** So previous we have recognized that it's been an issue. We continue to work with them, as I said, going forward.

With regard to the issues at HMP, we all know that. We've talked about that since we've been here in government and I'm sure the Members heard it when they were in government as well. It's been an ongoing issue for 10, 20, 50, 100 years, which is why the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has put forward a plan to build a new facility and we look forward to the support. We've already got it from all Members on the other side of the House to come together to agree to that new facility when it comes forward. It will be better for inmates and the population as a whole.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, yesterday, the Premier said that debating the validity and variance of numbers between the NLMA and his government serves no one. It does if you are without a doctor or a government relying on that data to make health care decisions.

The Minister of Health says that his number of 48,000 patients without a doctor comes from Patient Connect NL. Yet, according to the NLMA, 61 per cent of those surveyed had never heard of Patient Connect NL.

I ask the Premier: Given the potential unreliability of Patient Connect's data, how can the people of the province be sure his government's health care decisions are sound?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

The Member opposite left out what I did conclude with, which was if one person is without a family doctor in the province, it is a concern to us.

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

**A. FUREY:** So that's what we're working to ensure that everybody has access to primary care.

When looking at the methodology of either one of those surveys, Mr. Speaker, there are flaws in surveys. So whether it's the high- or low-level mark, you could argue that neither is correct.

What is true is that there is a crisis in primary health care. What is true is that the government has a plan to address it. What is true is that we won't stop, we'll work with

the NLMA and other stakeholders to ensure that people of this province has sustainable access to primary care.

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

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

**J. DINN:** We're all aware, Speaker, of the crisis in health care.

Can the Premier tell us then what action his government plans to take to promote Patient Connect to ensure that its data is reliable, that the people of the province have confidence in government's decision and that those without a doctor know exactly who to call?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take the point that if people are now aware of Patient Connect that we can advertise that more broadly.

We've added to MCP, any time any individual renews their MCP card, the question is there asking if they have access at the primary care, Mr. Speaker. So that will give a very reliable set of numbers, 20 per cent a year over the next five years. But five years from now, we'll know exactly who in the province does or does not have access to primary care. In the meantime, on an annual basis, we will get a reflection from MCP and to the Member's point we can advertise Patient Connect more broadly.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

Speaker, the government keeps mentioning that they are opening collaborative care

clinics, but Labrador has yet to have one announced. We have struggled with health care delivery for decades upon decades.

I ask the minister: Where is the plan for collaborative care clinics in Labrador? When are you going to announce that we're going to get a collaborative care clinic or are we just another afterthought?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, Labrador is certainly not an afterthought, but I hope, based on the Member's question, that he will vote for the upcoming budget.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

A constituent of mine is on remand at the Labrador Correctional Facility for one year and three months and is being denied travel to attend his mother's funeral due to a shortage of correctional officers. So if the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is going to incarcerate people, it's unacceptable that the Provincial Court system continues to take months to years to deal with charges.

I ask the minister: Will he look into this to ensure that those in custody are treated with human decency whether it's being able to attend a mother's funeral or timely processing through the justice system?

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

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

My condolences certainly go out to this man for the loss of his mother. I am sure it's a very difficult time for him. We do, obviously, work very hard with members of the justice



system, including the judiciary both at the Provincial Courts, the Supreme Court, with our RNC and RCMP partners as well, to ensure that everyone has accessible access to justice that's quick as possible, but, of course, they're always going to be faced with issues through the court process. We want to make sure that everybody's Charter rights are acknowledged and recognized as well as they go through the process.

So those things do take time, unfortunately, but it is for the betterment of society as a whole to make sure that we do what we can to make sure there's access, but in recognition of the Charter as well.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Three months ago the Auditor General delivered a report on *Adult Custody & Community Corrections* which stated: Adult custody policies on rehabilitation programming and reintegration were incomplete, inadequate and outdated and for the majority of the criteria assessed, no policies existed to guide adult custody at all.

I ask the Minister of Justice: What is his department doing to address these significant failings identified in the Auditor General's report in order to restore public confidence in our justice system?

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

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

I thank the Auditor General for her work on that report, but I do note that report covered a timeline between 2016 and 2019 so it's far from a current snapshot in time. Lots of things have been done before my time as

Minister of Justice and Public Safety between 2020 and 2021 that have addressed those issues that were raised in the Auditor General's report.

Of course, we continue to address issues in the Auditor General's report now as we go forward, including issues related to bail, supervision and things like that. We also had federal-provincial-territorial meetings just last week, on Friday actually, about bail reform in this country and our province had a lot to say about that.

We look forward to upcoming amendments to the *Criminal Code* that will deal with that issue and that is just one of the things that we are doing in the department to deal with those issues.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

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

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order, if I may.

**SPEAKER:** Pardon?

**G. BYRNE:** I stand on a point of order, if I may.

**SPEAKER:** Yes, go ahead.

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to cite Standing Order 49, which all Members of the House are very well aware of. It's a Standing Order that has been assented to and agreed to by us all to ensure that the House retains and

enhances its dignity and the respect for all Members.

During the course of discourse, during Question Period, I believe an offence may have occurred to Standing Order 49. There would be a wonderful opportunity to correct that and to elevate again the respect all Members share with each other and the dignity of the House.

I believe the Member for Conception Bay South, upon reflection of the discourse, the comments were made very early in the Question Period and I believe the Member for Conception Bay South may have had an opportunity to reflect on his own words.

I believe you will agree and other Members of the House will agree that the term was used against another Member indicating that the House or the Member was misleading the House or misleading the Members.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we'll all agree that sometimes the House gets high spirited because we may not necessarily agree with each other, that does not mean that we create a falsehood or a mistruth. The word misled is unparliamentary. Standing Order 49 does ensure that the dignity of the House is maintained, respect for all Members is maintained and that no offence should occur to another Member.

So with that said, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a wonderful opportunity before us right now where the hon. Member for Conception Bay South can stand amongst us, indicate that he did misspeak, that he would like to apologize and he would like to withdraw the remark. I think that would show a great leadership on his part.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to speak to this. This here was just a debate about facts. When we stand in the House of Assembly we continue to dispute facts and figures of what's happening here. We continue to represent people based on what we're hearing from them and what we're being told is happening.

The minister has one version of what happened, my colleague here talking to front-line people has another version. All this here was a dispute over facts, Mr. Speaker. Not a violation of House rules. Not an insult to the minister in any way, shape or form. A debate, an open debate about facts. At the end of the day, in an open discussion, the facts will speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague here is very confident about what's happening particularly in the child care industry here and what has been represented and not represented. This is about a debate upon facts.

If the minister wants to come back tomorrow and show some documentation as to dispute what's been said here, well we would welcome that dialogue. Right now, we stand by the facts that we've talked about by having discussion with colleagues and the people in the general public here about the impact that child care supports are having on the industry itself.

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

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

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

I listened to the comments from the Leader of the Opposition here. I agree we have a version of what happened and there are facts on this side and they think that they facts they have are the proper version. That is what a debate is. We debate the issues and we put facts forward; you put facts

forward and we debate the issues. That's great debate, that's what we're here for.

Unfortunately, what happened was there was language used that's unparliamentary. It's a separate issue from whether the facts were presented or not or whether we're debating it. You don't get to say well, we were debating something so I can say whatever I want. That's not what the rules say, that's not what the *Standing Orders* say. The *Standing Orders* say you cannot use unparliamentary language. What we are saying is that unparliamentary language was used.

If the position of the Opposition is we can breach all the rules as long as we say we're arguing in debate, well we have a bigger problem here, Speaker. If they think that they can use unparliamentary language at any point in time when they're here because a debate is ongoing, throw out the Standing Order book.

Thank you.

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

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

Maybe we've come to a conversation that's been always left alone, because I've heard misleading used in this House many, many, many times and by Members opposite, and I'm sure *Hansard* will dictate that.

I make no apologies to what I stand for. I'm not perfect and I make lots of mistakes, but I'm willing to own my mistakes. Unlike government opposite, I can own my mistakes. But I will stand in this place, and I've said it before, the people of CBS, as long as they want to put me here, as long as I stay here. If I have a job to do, I will do the job to the best of my ability. Not the best one in this House, to the best of my ability.

I do my homework, I talk to people, and when I hear stuff that's not accurate, I take

great offence to it. I've heard for the last two days inaccurate comments made.

So the word "misleading" has been used in this House again more times than I want to mention. So if people want to try to make this into a grandstand – which that's what it is – about something I said, I cannot say I'm sorry for something I believe in. I believe we have serious child care issues in this province. As a matter of two weeks, three weeks ago, I done a *CBC Radio* talk show and they called it a child care crisis.

I will stand with the parents, the child care operators, the mothers that are home stressed out, the people that are in my district that can't find work, can't go to work because they can't get child care. If I got to stand my place here and be passionate about it, no apology is necessary, Mr. Speaker. It is what I stand for.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

On the point of order, I'll take a closer review on broadcast and the video tapes and report back to the House tomorrow.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

**SPEAKER:** The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you for the reminder.

Pursuant to section 28(4)(e) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling an order-in-council authorizing the preparation of a special warrant for the fiscal year '22-'23.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Consistent with the recommendation from the Office of the Auditor General to report on the performance of the Junior Exploration Assistance Program to the House of Assembly, I am pleased to stand in the House today to table the Junior Exploration Assistance performance measures evaluation, years 2019-20 to 2021-22, as prepared in June 2022.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**A. PARSONS:** Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydroelectric Corporation and Nalcor Energy, Bill 33.

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

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I further give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Electrical Power Control Act, 1954, and the Public Utilities Act, Bill 34.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Dr. Wm H. Newhook Community Health Centre is located in Whitbourne and provides services to residents of the area, in addition to incidents which may happen on the province's largest highway, Route 1.

The Dr. Wm H. Newhook Community Health Centre's emergency room has experienced frequent and numerous closures over the last year. The emergency service offered by the health care is often not available for residents leading to a significant amount of concern and worry among residents, in addition to residents having to drive to another emergency room.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately enact a plan which ensures the Dr. Wm H. Newhook Community Health Centre is fully staffed, open and able to provide emergency health care services.

We had a rally in Whitbourne recently. It was scheduled for a Saturday and because of weather it got postponed and put onto the next day, Sunday. For all the people that I saw there that pivoted, that changed their schedule, that was what was enlightening to me. It wasn't short of people or speakers or anything like that, for the simple fact that it

was so important to them. But do you know what? It's so important to this whole province.

In my District of Placentia West - Bellevue, I don't have a physical hospital. So just imagine how important that is for the people from Southern Harbour and Arnold's Cove because if it's a big deal, then they're going to go to Whitbourne to get triaged and then they're going to go on to St. John's, if they've got to. But if that's not available, now they've got to go to Clarenville and come all the way to St. John's, if they get sent to St. John's. So it is very strategically placed.

The Health Accord itself tells us that the hospital needs to be in a catchment area of 6,000 people. This one, right now, currently, is in a catchment area of 6,200 and we're taking away services. I hear what you're saying in Question Period about trying to bring back services, slowly but surely, but that's the problem, it shouldn't have got to this point. We should have known that it was important.

I had a lady in my district that would have relied on the Newhook centre to get her chemo treatments. She had to go to Ontario. This is a volunteer in my district that gives her heart and soul every day that could have utilized the services at the William Newhook centre.

It's just not right. Let's do the right thing because it's the right thing to do.

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

**J. DWYER:** Let's keep this hospital open.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I do remind the gallery, I know how passionate you are, but I do remind you that you're not allowed to participate in debate.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Many residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, under the direction of their health care provider, have to thin their blood in order to avoid a heart attack or stroke. The province covers fully Warfarin, but not newer, safer medications like Xarelto, Eliquis and other anticoagulants.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to add these safer blood thinners to our Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program coverage. The Food and Drug Administration state these drugs are less likely to cause strokes than Warfarin as well as other benefits such as fewer drug interactions.

We are quite aware that we spend the most per capita in Canada. We know that, we do. But here is one of which we can save money and we would like to present that to you now and the signatures on the petition.

The Leader of the Official Opposition stated yesterday that people want action on the health care crisis. The minister had said we are committed to working with stakeholders to create ideas that will reimagine the health care system for a sustainable system.

The cost to government to monitor Warfarin is greater than the cost of these newer drugs, especially since now we have generic. Before it cost about \$100, now the generic has it down to less than \$40.

In order for a patient to go on these new medications when they can't afford it, they've got to show five consecutive readings of uncontrolled readings before they consider special authorization. Then they need to apply, which conceivably would be several more months. Think of the risk that it puts Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians at, all in a system that costs us more money.

The doctor gets paid \$15 a month to monitor a patient with Warfarin. The lab, I would assume for the monthly blood work, estimated at \$30. The cost of patients having to travel in order to get the blood work is an added cost, but factor in if we have a situation where one of our residents in Newfoundland and Labrador have to go to the Miller Centre with a stroke, then the expenses are gone through the roof.

Most other provinces in Canada, not all, most other provinces have changed their law that this generic drug is now deferred as a method of treatment. Doctors agree with it. We haven't done it here as a government. We would suggest that is a way to save money and better help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the case. Here is one suggestion.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS individual residents and municipal leaders have spoken to the deplorable road conditions in the District of Harbour Main; and

WHEREAS the district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, South River, North River, Roaches Line and Makinsons who have roads in desperate need of repair and paving, specifically Route 60 and 70; and

WHEREAS these roads see high-volume traffic flows every day and drivers can

expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed-out areas along the way.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary steps to repair and repave these important roadways to ensure the safety of the driving public who use them on a regular basis.

First of all, Speaker, I do have to acknowledge, pursuant to the multi-year roads program that was just recently announced, early March, that is part of their roads plan; \$225 million the government is investing in highway construction in 2023-24. So I do acknowledge in that plan that there is some paving that will be conducted in the paving sections between North River and South River. It was badly needed and the minister knows this. He came out to the District of Harbour Main with me. We toured the whole area; he saw the areas. So we're glad to see that this is an acknowledgement of how desperate the roads were there.

However, Speaker, one other area that I even hear more complaints from, not only constituents in my district but from outside the constituency, is in regard to the roads from Upper Gullies going right to Holyrood, Route 60.

Now, I do acknowledge that Maher's Bridge will be refurbished. That is good, but, Speaker, something needs to be done. Not only am I hearing from people in the district and outside, but even ambulances who have to drive on these roads who are concerned about these safety issues that are involved.

Speaker, this is a serious issue. I've presented this petition many, many times. It still remains a very important issue in the District of Harbour Main and we're hoping that the minister will also address those conditions specifically from Holyrood out to

Upper Gullies, which are desperate and in need of repair.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

**E. LOVELESS:** You're welcome.

But in terms of Route 60, I'll just reiterate here that there's long-term planning required. It's not just the provincial government that needs to be involved here. I've spoken with colleagues on both sides of you in terms of having a bigger conversation about the long-term planning for Route 60.

Because Route 60 extends quite the distance. We have the City of St. John's that's involved in maintaining that as well. We know as a province we have a big blueprint in terms of maintaining the road. So I'm asking the councils to get involved, let's have a conversation about a long-term plan for Route 60, like many other routes in the province.

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

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

This petition is about keeping senior couples together in long-term care.

To the hon. House of Assembly:

WHEREAS senior couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

WHEREAS seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

WHEREAS separating couples has a detrimental effect on their health and well-being; and

WHEREAS the province has a rapidly aging population, which is one of the most important challenges confronting government;

We, the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to change its current policy of separating couples due to their differing levels of care in the publicly funded, universal long-term care system and direct regional health boards to do the same and pass legislation to this effect.

I guess now with one regional health board that will take care of the problem in some ways. Ultimately, this is about staffing, about the lack of people to do the job and about finding those resources to do it.

Speaker, we know that a number of the beds in the long-term care facilities in the St. John's metro area are closed because of lack of staff. We also know that there are a significant number of people occupying acute-care beds because the beds in these long-term care facilities are not open because they do not have staff.

You can see this play out with the number of people who are looking to care for their elderly parents or loved ones. I was telling you yesterday about one person in particular who their mother was moved out to Placentia because of the fact that she needed to go into a long-term care facility but there's none here. I will tell you that this person would stop and see their mother daily, several times a day. She moved out to Placentia and it meant that she could not visit her on a regular basis. It was traumatic; it was detrimental to her health and to the health of her mother.

The key thing here that prevented her is the same thing that prevents couples from being together. It comes down to a staffing issue. Somewhere along the line, Speaker, we've got to deal with this and address this

and maybe look at training people up from within the system to do those skills.

Thank you.

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

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

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a 20 cent per litre tax on sugar-sweetened beverages at a time when many families, seniors and residents of the province are struggling with the already skyrocketing increased cost of living in the province.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to encourage the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to cancel the sugar-sweetened beverage tax at the earliest opportunity.

Speaker, we've heard lots of comments about things that are outside of government's control. The federal government has a responsibility for this, there are issues all across the other parts of Canada with another problem, but the sugar tax is within the control of this particular government. They implemented it and they can turn around and cancel it.

What I find really interesting, it was brought in – quote – to modify behaviour. That was the Premier talking about modifying the behaviour of people in Newfoundland and Labrador so they'd drink less sugary drinks. Then I have heard questions – the minister said well, we'll know it's successful if we don't collect any revenue from the tax.

I'm just curious to see how much revenue has been collected since the sugar tax came in to the coffers of Newfoundland and Labrador and how much, if that logic persists, there should be nothing in the budget for next year.

Let's do everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador a favour and it's one of the things I will look forward to in next week's budget is the fact that they will stand up and cancel this tax which exists nowhere else in Canada.

Thank you.

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

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

You'll probably hear me again and again talking about this because the Opposition seems to be not respectful of what experts are saying about sugar-sweetened beverages and how detrimental they are to health.

So allow me to table this, Speaker. It's called the "Consumption of sugar from soft drinks falls within a year of UK sugar tax." This is from the *British Medical Journal*, Speaker, and it talks about people appear to be buying and consuming less sugar from soft drinks since the UK introduced the tax on sugary drinks. It goes on to say that the overall sales of soft drinks have not fallen.

So I'll table this from the *British Medical Journal* and I'll remind the Member opposite that the *British Medical Journal*, the World Health Organization, the Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Paediatric Society, all are encouraged that Newfoundland and Labrador has introduced a sugar-sweetened beverage tax

It is a choice. If you consume sugar-sweetened beverages, which we know are detrimental to your health, there is a tax. If you consume a beverage that does not have sugar, that is your choice.

Thank you, Speaker.



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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 10.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

**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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I Call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 27, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 27, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3," carried. (Bill 27) Carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 27)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time? Tomorrow?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 27 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Architects Act, 2008, Bill 29, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It's been moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Architects Act, 2008, Bill 29, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Architects Act, 2008," carried. (Bill 29)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Architects Act, 2008. (Bill 29)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 29 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of DGSNL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Regulations of Mortgage Brokerages and Mortgage Brokers in the Province, Bill 30, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Regulations of Mortgage Brokerages and Mortgage Brokers in the Province, Bill 30, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the Regulations of Mortgage Brokerages and Mortgage Brokers in the Province," carried. (Bill 30)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Respecting the Regulations of Mortgage Brokerages and Mortgage Brokers in the Province. (Bill 30)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 30 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 8.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Patient Safety Act, Bill 31, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Patient Safety Act, Bill 31, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Patient Safety Act," carried. (Bill 31)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Patient Safety Act. (Bill 31)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 31 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 9.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act, Bill 32, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act, Bill 32, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act." (Bill 32)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act. (Bill 32)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 32 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, and move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Bill 21 and related resolution.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

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.

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

### **Committee of the Whole**

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are considered the related resolution and Bill 21, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024

and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

### **Resolution**

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

"That is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the sum of \$2,974,162,700."

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

I'm recognizing the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

I'm glad to be back here again in the House of Assembly to debate this very important but very standard Interim Supply bill.

For the people who are tuning in this afternoon, this is Bill 21; it is an Interim Supply bill, which basically grants the ability for Supply, for money, between the periods of April 1 until sometime the end of June.

Chair, what that does is allows the normal course of government to continue while we debate in the House of Assembly and scrutinize and review and look at every Estimate and every expenditure of government to continue on. So this Interim Supply bill is very normal practice of the House of Assembly. It is based on 37 per cent of 2022-23, which is the year that we're in right now, because remember that we have a fiscal year that ends the end of March. So for that period of time, we have current and capital budgets and gross expenditures of \$2,974,162,700, a substantial sum, but I will remind the people of the House and the people that are listening today that this is not in addition to the budget. This is not incremental to the budget. This will be used while we debate

the budget and while we review and scrutinize.

So once we are finished and debate the budget and pass the budget, this money will rest and form part of the budget expenditure. So it is just for the general operations of government: payroll, income support, other expenditure obligations, including some for my hon. colleague that is doing a lot of infrastructure.

I will say that this is an important discussion and because it is part of the budgetary process, Members who wish to discuss the budget can do so at this time or the expenditures of government.

I listened intently yesterday as I sat here and one of the expenditures that this government has undertaken in the last year has been helping people with the cost of living. Chair, I will say that we've put a tremendous amount of money toward that, almost half a billion dollars, \$500 million towards this end. I think it was a good investment in the people of the province. Thankfully, we had additional revenues in the last year because the price of oil was higher, because we had additional revenues based on the fact that our economy was stronger than had been anticipated coming out of COVID.

But we've done things in the past year on the cost of living, like we provided the people of the province, 411,000 people in the province, with a cheque valued at \$500 – it was helpful. It was one of the many measures that we provided to people.

We talked about it during Question Period today. We also provided an oil supplement, Chair, for \$500. Those that qualified were able to receive and some are still receiving a \$500 supplement to help them to offset the cost of oil that had risen dramatically.

We also did things, like we lowered our gas tax – one of the lowest gas taxes in the country. Next to Alberta, it was the lowest

gas tax in the country. I will say, Chair, this helps not only the people of the province who need to drive their vehicles to go to medical appointments or go to the bank, or go wherever, it also helps businesses in that you have businesses that are doing a lot of commuting as well. So it helped lower that cost. That actually helped with the cost of moving the transport of goods and that's important.

Chair, I will say that this year Newfoundland and Labrador have one of the lowest cost-of-living increases in the country. I think we were able to keep our cost of living the second lowest in the country, in terms of the provinces, because we have been able to introduce these measures.

We also increased the Seniors' Benefit. We increased the Income Supplement. We increased income support. All those are helpful longer term for people who need extra supports, Chair. So I think it was a very important investment that we made to the people of the province. We look to the next budget to what we may be able to do in '23-'24, but right now we're debating the Interim Supply to get us to that budgetary process.

Before I take my seat, the other thing I heard from multiple Members yesterday was on what the Members opposite are calling the sugar tax. It's a tax that we have put on sugar-sweetened beverages. As we've said in this House many, many times, this is all part of the very important goal that we have to become one of the healthiest provinces by 2031. Now that's a lofty goal. We have the poorest health outcomes in the country right now: highest in diabetes, the highest in cancers. We have some serious health challenges that we have to overcome.

One of the ways that we're doing that is by implementing a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. This is following the advice of people like the World Health Organization who said – and I am quoting from them now

– “Consumption of free sugars, including products like sugary drinks, is a major factor in the global increase of people suffering from obesity and diabetes.”

Let me quote from the Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Association: “Choosing healthy drink choices is as important as choosing healthy food choices. We recommend you make water your drink of choice and reduce your intake of sugary drinks ....”

Canadian Cancer Society: “Sugary drinks are the single largest contributor of sugar in the average Canadian diet. Eating a healthy diet, with lots of vegetables, fruit and fibre and low in added sugar, helps reduce the risk of cancer.”

These are compelling reasons why we’re saying to the people of the province, you have a choice. You can choose a sugar-sweetened drink. That’s your choice, but you need to pay a tax on that, or you can choose something that has less sugar, no sugar and will give you a better health outcome.

I will say to you, Chair, that I understand that in a regular soft drink that people may consume would have upwards of 17 teaspoons of sugar. I am sure there’s not anyone in this room that would take 17 teaspoons of sugar and put them in their glass of water and drink it down. You wouldn’t think of doing that, but because when we’re consuming a sugar-sweetened drink, we’re not aware of that.

So what we’re saying to the people of the province is please be aware. We’re following what the advice is of the experts: World Health Organization, the *British Medical Journal*, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Paediatric Society, all of these are experts and we’re following their advice. With that, I’ll take my seat and listen to the continuing debate. But, again, this is Interim Supply to allow the processes of

government to continue while we fully debate, discuss and review the upcoming budget of March 23, 2023.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair is recognizing the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It’s an honour to stand in this new sitting of the House here to debate, obviously, the legislation that’s going to frame up programs and services for the people of this province. I just want to make it aware that I’m now taking on a new critic role here as the shadow minister responsible for Finance, so I’ll have a very interesting next couple of months when the minister presents, next week, her budget and the debate we’ll have here about the influence that that will have on improving people’s lives or lack thereof. I’m still open to have that debate and see where it goes.

We will do, as I think we have done for the last eight years, very diligently, outline to the government what the people of this province think are good or bad and the suggestions that they put forward through us to improve their own lives and to improve the lives of people in Newfoundland and Labrador no matter if you live in Nain, Labrador or Conception Bay.

So what we’re looking at here is a bill that itself now is housekeeping to ensure that the civil service continues to run. Our budget processes are based on – for those at home who may not know – a fiscal end of March 31, but there’s always an expenditure carry-over that needs to be done to ensure payroll is done, infrastructure needs and that are done, as part of the process.

We wholeheartedly always support that. The devil is in the detail of the money, how it's going to be spent after, once the budget itself comes down. As people can attest to in this province, we've asked a multitude of questions, thousands of questions over the last eight years about the budget, the impact on people. Some of it, we agreed with government on; other ones, we didn't. In some cases, we even managed to convince them to do the right thing that would benefit the people of the province, based on what we've heard from the people of the province. We will continue to do that in this sitting also.

But I do want to make reference to some of the things that the minister has talked about in the process of where they spend their money, particularly some of the things that we – and I say we, as the Official Opposition – have heard from residents of this province that are not necessarily in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I do want to first acknowledge the discussion that we've had around the sugar tax. We've brought this up over the last year and a half, since it's been implemented, based on the principle that we can find no evidence, we can see no documentation that would show in any way, shape or form that this was going to improve health outcomes for anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador. What we did see, there would be more money coming out of people's pockets, particularly the most vulnerable, without any incentives to be able to help them live a healthier life.

Incentives that we had proposed were lowering the cost of milk. Lowering the cost of fruits and vegetables. Working with the producers in Newfoundland and Labrador to have it homegrown, to have it produced here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and ensure that the industries are viable and we have food security around the most nutritious things that are necessary. We've seen nothing relevant to what that would do.

We see it as a cash cow for government to determine what they're going to do with it.

Even if there had been identification of saying, the monies we're going to take will go into programs like Jumpstart – heralded as one of the best programs for integration for health care and social and mental recreation for young people in the world. Canadian Tire won it – in the world. A corporate entity coming together and being able to help return a 10-1 ratio.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Had I heard last year that they're going to take the monies that we're getting from the sugar tax, that we still don't agree with, but put that directly in something, we would have at least seen value in that. That would have made some sense. If you had put that directly into a program like that, that would have been done, outlining more of those, but we didn't. It didn't go to Jumpstart. That is one of the programs that you cut, that's a particular one and one that's already been proven to be implemented in schools, in recreation facilities across the province.

So if nothing else, a bit of encouragement. If you can make a few changes between now and next Thursday, put Jumpstart in there and revisit the monies that we put in there, getting back a 10-1 ratio and having a corporate citizen do a program that internationally is now recognized as doing more for young people from a social, recreation and health inclusive point of view than any other program that we've had in years in this country.

But I do also want to note, and I know it's been said a dozen times, stand by for what's coming, stay tuned, get ready to tune in next week. We're all very optimistic or we're hopefully optimistic, but I would suspect we're probably going to be disappointed in a lot of cases, because again there's been no example here that this administration has been proactive in

looking at programs and services that are going to benefit the people across the board, particularly from a budget point of view.

We've known and we've heard it for years and we've seen it here and we've outlined it, monies that have gone that should've been better proposed or better RFPs put out or better decisions made on where the monies have been going as part of that process. What we're asking here is to ensure that the budget process meets the needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I've been fortunate enough, and I'll say it again when we get up and we get to debate the budget next week, that this is my 42nd budget connected to the civil service of looking at what works and what doesn't. Do I say they're all the same? Of course they're not. What gets dictated on a budget here is the particular needs that people have put out, the priorities that are there, the revenues that are being generated as part of the process.

I was asked a question in the scrum yesterday that they're hearing rumours that government is going to tout that they've managed to balance the budget. They said: What do you think of that? I said: In a normal circumstance, I'd be supportive and see the value in it. But in a circumstance when we have 136,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without a family physician, when we have 750 nursing positions not filled, when we have issues within the correctional institutions, in our own health care institutions, when we have it in our educational institutions, when we have child care access almost obliterated, even though it might be affordable, but it's not accessible because they don't exist. When I look at things like that, then I have to start to question where we're going in this process in the budget line.

Do we 100 per cent agree with this bill? Will we vote for it? Of course we will. This is about supporting those valued civil servants

and the programs that already exist. That's not what's in debate right now. What's in debate, from our perspective here, is what's coming next Thursday, or the lack of what's coming next Thursday, or the vision of what's coming to ensure that the people of this province (inaudible).

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Oh, I get it, like I've said, I'm cautiously optimistic that you have been listening to this side of the House for the last year and that you have been listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who've outlined exactly what they feel are the priorities as part of that – I would hope.

Again, cautiously optimistic and we'll have that debate. Don't forget, and you've seen it, we're the administration that if you do something good, we'll acknowledge it and we'll support it. If you don't, then we're going to call you out and ask you to do the right thing. We've been fortunate enough you've managed to do a couple of right things over the last number of times that you changed.

But I want to acknowledge the fact that this here is to support those tens of thousands of civil servants who on a daily basis, working through frustration, being overworked in cases, not having the resources they need, having to change at a moment's notice because of shortages and the stressors and the priorities that have changed, this is about supporting them.

I'm happy to say I've had the privilege of working with thousands of them during my career and see the due diligence and see the support that they've had. I look forward to doing that again in the future, but I would hope that they're reassured, as the citizens of this province need to be reassured next week, that the budget reflects the importance that they play and gives them the mechanism and the infrastructure and all the supports that are going to be necessary for them to be able to do their



jobs in the fashion that's beneficial to the people of this province.

I would hope the people of this province see three key things: an ability to make sure that they're going to have access to proper health care 24-7, as close as possible to where they live and as professional as possible as anywhere else in this country. Do that right investment and you'll get an applause from this side of it. Lowering the economic hardship on people in this province by ensuring that the cost of living is controlled here, ensuring that our economy is being stimulated, ensuring that people have access to services that they necessarily need to have and also ensuring that the other infrastructures are important, that people have access.

Child care: making a process there that works for people to access child care. It's not about affordability anymore. I'll give credit, new programs that are out federally and provincially do make that affordable. But affordability doesn't work if it's not accessible and you don't have it as part of that whole process. So we're also looking at the infrastructure. We still have a lot of monies that need to be invested.

The minister talked about \$200-plus million in our roads program, but I looked at that list, there are still a lot of roads in Newfoundland and Labrador that are not on it that need a lot of work done as part of this process. So we need to start prioritizing exactly how we do things that are in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador and the residents that live here.

Also, getting the message out to the world that we're open for business. As long as you can come here, we will be the benefactors. The people of this province will be the people who benefit from that. You can make money but not on the backs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. You could make it as a partnership with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's

one of the things we want to see this administration put forward.

Last, I want to say we have the most skilled workers anywhere in this country or anywhere in the world. I've asked that a community benefits agreement be put in place to ensure money spent in Newfoundland and Labrador will go to Newfoundland and Labrador workers.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I'm recognizing the hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I hadn't intended to get up, but I just wanted to respond, because there are some good points that the Member opposite makes. I don't know if he puts the full story out, and this is probably something I haven't spoken about. I could speak about IET or budget processes or all of these things, but the Member mentioned the sugar tax.

I know it's part of a petition that was brought up earlier. What I want to do is I just want to put some, I guess, other context to that for people that might be listening and perhaps some of what I've seen in that.

Whenever you see the word tax, it's pretty easy to jump on. I've seen that. I was here in 2016 and, believe me, we got dinged on the different revenue measures that we took to combat the fiscally abhorrent situation that was left to us. That's what was left to us. We did that and, believe me, you want to hear the reaction we got.

So in this case, we have something called the sugar tax and it's made out of a policy decision when we talk about health care. Health care consumes most of the Question Periods and debates here. I bet you – in fact

I know speaking to my colleagues at various national meetings – health care is the leading issue in most jurisdictions now. We're all going through it together, but the reality is, as most of you know, when it affects you here in your province, that's what matters most. We get that.

But one of the realities is – and I think this is proven in studies – that we, in this province, are leading the country in a lot of these morbidities, when we talk about heart disease and cardiovascular issues and diabetic situations, we lead that. So it's a policy decision made called the sugar tax – and I want to point out, because the Member, I think he just said – and correct me if I'm wrong – we're going after the most vulnerable.

It's never been put out though – and perhaps it's a bad job on us – we haven't told people well enough or often enough that every cent that comes in does not go into the Treasury to pay for something else like a road or things like that – all well intentioned. Everything goes back into lifestyle and food for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including Kids Eat Smart, including the prenatal programs.

Now, I can tell you, in fact, if you look to Kids Eat Smart, what they've seen in the last year, they've seen an increase in schools wanting to join. They've been around in some places forever. I can say this as a parent who volunteered with Kids Eat Smart in schools and was up there buttering toast and helping to get juice and cereal and all that, the number of kids coming in has always been pretty substantive, but the reality is it's getting more. Part of that is because the quality of the programs and the volunteers has been there and it has increased. Perhaps the need has increased, but let's not say that we're talking money off the backs of vulnerable to pad government when the reality is that every single cent of revenue that comes in is going right back out the door –

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

**A. PARSONS:** – and it is helping vulnerable people. It is helping pregnant people that need this prenatal program. Again, something that we would like to see a demand in that would show that we have a birth rate that is going in the right direction. We're seeing Kids Eat Smart volunteers. We're seeing the Physical Activity Tax Credit.

So I get the point, we can have a difference of opinion as it relates to the policy direction and why we're doing it: is it good or bad? I get that. But I just want to ensure people know, because not everybody knows. I'm no different than anybody else, I'm out on the street, I'm at the rink and somebody will mention, oh, you know the difference between Pepsi and Diet Pepsi. And a lot of times what they've said is, well, that's just government taking it back, but they don't realize where it's going back to. Now, you can also disagree with that, that I don't think you should tax that to put into that. That's fine.

But I just want to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians realize that any cent that comes in – I think last year it was estimated that it was about \$5.1 million to be taken in over the course of the remainder of the year. I think it's about \$7 million annualized. I can guarantee you that every cent of that and more goes out into needs in the community when it comes to active and healthy lifestyles, food for children, food for students in all of our schools and again when we look at the prenatal program.

I just want people to realize that this was a policy decision that was – give the Premier credit, the Premier led it and said we need to do something about some of the reasons why our health care system is so challenged, because, unfortunately, we have led, and for sometime have led, the country in these afflictions. We don't want to be the leaders in that. We need to change

the course of that and part of that sometimes is through measures that people don't necessarily like.

But I can tell you right now that if every cent that I have to pay through that – and this is just me personally – is going to go into a breakfast somewhere in this province for a student who never had it otherwise, then I will stand up and support it every single time. That's me.

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

**A. PARSONS:** I just want to put that out. That's my only contribution to the debate at this point. I'm just going to sit down before my time is done, but I just felt I needed to respond to the Member, as well as to the Member opposite for Stephenville - Port au Port because he mentioned the sugar tax and everything else too, but we're not getting the full story.

Now, you can talk about how we shouldn't do breakfast programs and stuff, that's a part of debate, but I just want to put that out there because that's perhaps my most frustrating thing is that not everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador realizes where that money is going. It's coming in through these products and it's going right back out to, in many cases, tables in schools in Newfoundland and Labrador being consumed by children in many parts, urban and rural.

I think that's a good thing. I'm glad to know that these children are starting off the day with a good meal. In fact, we know we had to find a way to continue that. That struggle is real. Costs have gone up. We need to find a way to help them through that and hopefully we can.

I look forward to the Minister of Finance's budget next Thursday. I'd like to congratulate her in advance of the work that she and her team have taken. Let's see where we are in a week and a few days.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'm recognizing the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair; I'm looking forward to this spirited debate.

It's good to be back in this hon. House. It's good to be able to have the opportunity to stand to represent the good people of my district and to have wholesome debate on Bill 21. The wholesome debate continues, Mr. Chair. It's good to be here today to debate Bill 21 for Interim Supply and, as the hon. minister said earlier, this is to provide the funding for the continuance of normal government operations.

So for those watching at home, I know there are members in my district today watching. There are always members from Bonavista watching and so just for that benefit it's for the normal continuance of government operations.

Mr. Chair, when I look at the schedule for the expenditure in this Bill 21, I want to take a few moments to speak on several of the headings. The first one I'll go under is health care. We've had much spirited debate in this hon. House on health care, if it's the lack of family doctors from right across the province – I believe the number is 137,000. When you look at family members who are without a general practitioner or a nurse practitioner. I know full well members of my family who have had to wait 4½ or five months without a family doctor in order to be on the list and, of course, we're very thankful to have a nurse practitioner to be able to call upon.

When we look at the nurses in our province who are overworked, who are stressed with respect to the covering of positions and what have you. We hear about that every

day, Mr. Chair, when you're looking at the expenditure amount for Health and Community Services: \$1,257,732,700.

We can go into emergency rooms, wait times in emergency rooms, as we discussed here today and was said in petition, the closure of emergency rooms. This is always a constant discussion for my office, for my constituency assistant and I to deal with and I'm sure for the other 39 Members in this hon. House.

We look at accessibility for our seniors into long-term care and I know that I have quite the lengthy list of seniors waiting for long-term care. This week we also discussed resident safety in our homes. We look at the cost of ambulances and the turmoil that areas of the province are in with respect to a lack of ambulances and qualified staff. This is all related to, of course, the budget that we're going to be having coming up as Madam Minister said next Thursday, I believe, she said.

She did congratulate her staff as well, and I'd like to take an opportunity to congratulate the staff here in the Official Opposition for doing our –

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

**J. WALL:** We are only as good as the staff around us and I do appreciate all the work that's done.

Mr. Chair, when we look at the next heading of Transportation and Infrastructure: \$540,186,200. We all know the amount of roadwork that's needed in our province. I've had the opportunity to travel many areas of the province from Stephenville - Port au Port to the Burin Peninsula to St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows on the Northern Peninsula. I drove as far as Cape Onion, which is up around Ship Cove and, yes, this past week I had the opportunity to drive the roads in Exploits. So I would urge the minister, yes, \$225 million in the roads plan for this year is a great amount of money for

the work that needs to be done, but there's a lot of work that has to be done so I would encourage the minister to have a look at what's around the province, what's needed and in Exploits, for sure, to support my colleague.

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

**J. WALL:** Chair, when we look at Education: \$387,083,700 in Education. We've all had the opportunity – I know I have – to speak with teachers in my district. When you look at the class sizes of what we're dealing with. When you look at teachers and the lack of supports that they have, right down to supplies being covered. If it's student assistants in the classrooms, guidance counsellors, special services that support the teachers in their classrooms, we're all looking for an increase with respect to our education. So I would urge the minister, when she's taking that into consideration with respect to our teachers and the youth.

Last year in budget debate, Madam Minister said the youth are, of course, the future of our province. No doubt. We all agree. We don't disagree with that. So I look for the dollar figure when we come to education as well in this upcoming budget and, of course, the need that is there for that.

Mr. Chair, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Municipal Affairs as part of my critic portfolio as well. I always take the opportunity when I'm in different parts of the province to speak to mayors and councillors, CAOs, town managers and I can honestly say that municipalities are struggling. They certainly are when it comes to how the cost of living, it is affecting our municipalities with the normal day-to-day operations. It's getting more and more expensive and more and more taxing to run a municipality or a Local Service District in our province with the increased costs of day-to-day operations and how that affects their budgets.

We have former municipal leaders in this House so we all know how that affects the residents because municipalities got to have a balanced budget. Of course, they cannot run a deficit, that tax increase is then passed on to the residents of the particular towns to take the hit. One thing that I look at – I brought it up last year in budget debate – is the amount of the Municipal Operating Grant that's going to municipalities. It has been \$22 million since 2015.

We have spoken with members of municipalities of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know Members of the government side have spoken to them as well and they're looking for an increase in Municipal Operating Grants for municipalities to operate in a safe manner. So that \$22 million – is it \$28 million this year for an MOG? We looked at the cost of living. That all has to be looked at and I'm sure that Madam Minister has taken that into consideration. I look forward to that coming up in the budget with respect to municipalities.

I always take the opportunity to recognize volunteer fire departments as well, Mr. Chair, and I'll do this again very briefly because, as part of the municipal budget, fire departments fall under that as well. It is getting more and more difficult to operate a fire department with everything that's required to operate safely for all of their volunteers. The cost is constantly increasing.

So I'll just give you a quick look at the budget for two departments in my district. The Town of Torbay's fire department has a budget of \$494,000 and the Town of Pouch Cove, \$212,000. That's significant money when you're looking at municipalities trying to operate and run effectively when you're looking at what's required for municipalities.

I'm looking forward to what's coming in this budget, Mr. Chair. I know that the minister has worked hard on this and her staff. So we will definitely look forward to see what is

there, how it's going to affect this House and how it's going to affect the province as a whole. I look forward to that, Mr. Chair.

I know I'll have many other opportunities to speak to this in the next coming weeks. Once again, glad to be back in the House, glad to have a good, honest, respectful debate when we're coming back and forth on this side of the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair is recognizing the hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, I appreciate it.

We're here to debate Interim Supply. I don't think anybody feels that we're not going to work with the government on granting Interim Supply because, at the end of the day, we need to pay the bills. But the thing is we are borrowing to pay the bills. That doesn't sit well with anybody. While there's nothing wrong with borrowing when you're in a good economic situation, borrowing right now when we're low in our economy is going to be detrimental years down the road.

Really what's needed here in our province is investment. I've said it before and I'll say it again, we have to stop looking at education and health care as a cost. We have to look at it as an investment and it's an investment in our own people. How do we invest in that? It's by building a strong economy. The new wind farms that are coming, LNG in my district, we're refurbishing the refinery, but we still have work to do when it comes to Bull Arm and other entities that are sunken costs here in the province, like the Kiewit Offshore facility in Marystown.

Hopefully, there's going to be some work coming to those very soon because, in my opinion and on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, I believe that if our people are working, we can pay for everything, but we can also invest and look at our government as being proactive, as opposed to just being reactive and paying the bills.

I understand about paying the bills, it's got to be done and nobody wants to be in arrears. But the cost to operate our municipalities and households is becoming more difficult day by day. It's becoming out of touch for some people. It kind of breaks my heart when I had an elderly person call me there not even two weeks ago and she said, Jeff, I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm either going to the grocery store or I'm going to the drugstore. I need both, but what one do I need more than the other. Unfortunately, it's a senior that doesn't have benefits afforded into their retirement, which is unfortunate.

That's something that we can tackle right away and have businesses – like individuals take on their elderly parents as dependents. Whereas those parents took on those kids and kept them until they were students, right up until they were 25. If we do the reverse and we say that from 65 to 90 is our 25-year commitment, that in kind, then I think that would work out and it wouldn't cost the government anything. You still pay your premiums for your insurance, but at least they could have insurance instead of taking the full price out of pocket, Mr. Chair.

All things are becoming out of reach, but we don't want it to be coming out of reach because we have a government that's out of touch. We have to understand what the needs of the people are and the way that I know the needs of the people is that I'm listening. I'm listening to the people that hired me to do this job. They want me to bring their voice to the House of Assembly in a kind, respectful and integral manner, but the thing is we need a willing participant

that's listening and understanding what the needs are for the people of Placentia West - Bellevue and our province.

So we're here to talk about granting Interim Supply and I'm willing to bet that this government in the coming days is going to tout themselves for running a surplus. When you're borrowing money, you don't ever run a surplus. So if you're taxing people and getting larger revenues, then that doesn't mean that you're running a surplus. That just means that you're taking the money out of the pockets of the people that are already telling you that I don't have it to give and we're still asking them to give it. So I don't think that I want to hear anything about a surplus. I want to hear about how we're investing in our people in the coming days.

If we're borrowing and placing additional taxes on our citizens, there is no surplus and this is high time that the government realized that they are taxing the people that simply just can't afford it. So we want to make sure that we're asking over here that there's certain taxes – as the Member for Burgeo - La Poile said, it's easy to pick on taxes for simple fact that it's something that resonates with everybody.

Nobody wants to pay extra taxes. Sometimes it's a necessary evil, but, at this point in time, the income is just not in the pockets of the people to pay it. It's making them basically rob Peter to pay Paul in order to get their bills paid. So we really want to get rid of the sugar tax, get rid of the carbon tax because these two really come from a position of opinion and lifestyle as opposed to what people really need and that is support from their Liberal elected Members to peacefully enjoy their way of life. That's what we are asking for on this side of the House and that's what we want to work with you to do and to accomplish.

It's not any one person's job. It's not any one person's responsibility. There are 40 Members that have to look after 530,000 people. That's what we need to wrap our

heads around. I always look out for my colleague from Burin - Grand Bank, if there are needs in his district, I'm certainly bringing those forward, but I'm talking to my colleague as well to make sure that it's okay with him that the voice that I'm portraying is not to overstep my bounds but it's to work with my colleague to make sure that it's okay with him to make sure that the voice that I'm portraying is not to overstep my bounds but it's to work with my colleague to make sure that we're working as a whole Burin Peninsula. Right now, the Burn Peninsula average age is 54 and the needs are very great when it comes to long-term care and for tertiary care in our hospitals, emergency care.

I'm very worried that the St. Lawrence hospital is going to get closed too because, as I stated earlier today, I don't have a physical hospital in my district. I rely on the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre, G. B. Cross and the Whitbourne clinic. Currently we're working on getting a clinic in Arnold's Cove. I have a meeting with the minister coming up later this week to bring that forward because it is a time-sensitive thing right now with the RFP and all that kind of stuff. I just want the people of the Arnold's Cove area which will also, if we get a nurse practitioner or doctor in Arnold's Cove, will take in Come By Chance, Goobies, Sunnyside, Southern Harbour, Little Harbour East and even Chance Cove for that matter if it continues in Whitbourne.

So with that being said, I mean, we just want people to be able to peacefully enjoy their life but, as the Health Accord says, get their services where they need them; not send them off on a wild goose chase wondering if an emergency is open or closed tonight.

With that being said, I just want to say that we need to take the opportunity to let our citizens peacefully enjoy their way of life here in Newfoundland and Labrador because, in all honesty, there is no other place like Newfoundland and Labrador. This

is the greatest place on earth but we, as a 40-Member Assembly, have to make it that great place again and it's not from taxing our people. It's about making sure that programs are in place, that people can peacefully enjoy their life.

So invest of our people and we'll all be better off. So what we want is to show us a plan. We know that the budget is coming. We're hoping there's a plan in there for what I'm talking about. Show us a plan. Because if we fail to plan, we are certainly planning to fail.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'm recognizing the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and Labrador Affairs.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

It's nice to be on my feet today as we're back for the spring sitting in the House of Assembly. Sometimes when we're on the front row and coordinating things and you like to give other people an opportunity, we're not always up as often. It's always a privilege to be a voice for the people of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. I've got an anniversary coming up the 25th of June. It'll be a decade that they have supported me through a by-election and three general elections –

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** It's a privilege to serve in the Premier's Cabinet, but my first loyalty is always to the people of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and I always remind them of that when I see them.

I think I'm going to start, Chair, on continuing on the theme of health care. We've been hearing much debate back and forth in the Legislature and there's nobody

on this side of the House that will deny that we don't have health care challenges in our province, right across the country and the globe. Coming out of the pandemic, I recently asked a former CEO of Eastern: Where did everybody go? But I guess there were all kinds of things that were happening there and they left the profession in big numbers.

As the Health Minister is on his feet every single day talking about a long list of incentives that we have put in place to encourage and there's tremendous recruitment and retention efforts ongoing. As was referenced, we've been working hard at the budget, maybe since November or earlier. So stay tuned for more on that side.

I would be remiss if I didn't weigh in to the sugar tax. There is so much misinformation out there, Chair, around the sugar tax. It's something that's really near and dear to my heart because until you've had a certain lived experience that really forces you to change your behaviour, you probably don't appreciate it to the level that others would.

My daughter was only six years old when diabetes came to live in our home and it was actually on World Diabetes Day, interestingly enough, in November of 2003, and that changed everything in our lives. I just remember being in St. Anthony for two or three weeks and they're teaching you what to do. We've come a long way thankfully with technology and she now wears a pump and she has sensors and if you're walking now and she's feeling low, she can scan her arm and say my sugar's going low.

But we learned from a very early age that her pancreas had stopped producing insulin and, therefore, she would have to take insulin by injection. Many people that are around the province are all too familiar with diabetes, and so activity was one of the things. The more active she was, the less insulin that she would need, and of course

she needed to be on a different diet. So you're not going to put your six-year-old child on one diet and mom and dad's going to live on a different one. So we began to change the patterns in our household and regular meetings with dietitians. Very early we began to read labels and look at carbs and look at sugar content.

So from that time onward, to think about a regular can of pop, 12 spoonfuls of sugar in a regular can of pop. It never came in our house since 2003. We're not missing anything. So when people talk about increasing tax and it's harming the vulnerable, I think it was the Premier himself that said one day in the house, instead of reaching for his regular can of pop, move your hand six inches and reach for the diet. I know I'm looking at the Chair who drinks no pop because he thinks none of it is any good for you and to stick to water and that's a whole other conversation.

But I think it's really important that – two things – when we talk about the challenges in health care, when we talk about this province that's leading in things we're not proud of like heart disease and chronic illness, every single day I think, as Members, we're dealing with someone who's trying to get moved into a bed, someone who's waiting for the cath lab. We have initiatives in place, they're short-term things we need to do, but when we look to the longer term, we want the people of our province to be healthier than they are today. When I am going around and I am knocking on doors, there are people that are younger than in their 50s that have a litany of health issues, many of them that came from lifestyle choices.

I'll go to the West Coast. I was very fortunate that I got to share four nights with my mom last week who lives on the other end of the country. My mom is going to be 74 years old; I hope no one is watching because I might be emancipated from the family. But she is with a large group of people who live a very active, healthy



lifestyle. Whoever is the most active in this Legislature, I doubt you could keep up with her. It just goes to show that if you're eating healthy and you're making the right choices, they're not the people that are really a burden on the health care. Nobody wants to be that, but there are all kinds of things that contribute to health.

I just want to say, Chair, since we have had a focus on healthier living, it has already been talked about, I don't need to reiterate the fact that the revenue that is coming in from the sugar tax is going back out. I want to share two or three stories, just since my time here in recent years as the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. Our government has contributed significantly around the province into walking trails. In my riding now when I start in L'Anse au Clair, the Pine Air Foot Path, right down to the Flagstaff in Cartwright. There are people skiing today in Cartwright on a groomed trail. Initiatives that we supported; people getting out. We hear a lot about mental health issues and it is better for their mental health and it is certainly better for their physical health.

Another thing that our government has been investing in community gardens. It was actually one of the executives in Transportation that came with me. We flew into the smallest community that I have last year and all we could see was these gardens in Norman Bay. The Member for Labrador West may have been to Norman Bay or might know where it is and everything was growing and I was so impressed. They were in this little isolated community. They were sharing the potatoes among families and eating fresh greens. I said: Did you have experience with that before we gave you the money for the community garden? They said: There is nobody here that did anything like that before. We got some soil, we planted the seeds and we watered it all summer a lot. Then they had this great crop and this return.

So really, Chair, that's what this is about. That's where, as we navigate our way through the health challenges that we're feeling right now at home in Newfoundland and Labrador that we're feeling across the country and beyond, as we look to the longer term, it is about educating the public that if you reach for that can of liquid, the Gatorade and the different things that are really, really filled with sugar, that there is a chance that there are health problems that come with that down the road.

Also, I just wanted to mention, talking about still on the theme of healthy living. It's been a busy year in Labrador. On Sunday night, I had the opportunity to speak at the opening ceremonies, along with my colleague who was in attendance there for Lake Melville, at the Labrador Winter Games, which, if there's anything, any event that galvanises, that brings Labradorians together from the south in the Straits to Nain in the north, it's the Labrador Winter Games that happens every three years.

It's nice that as I'm standing here today there's badminton happening and there's snowshoeing happening. That is about healthy living, bringing those young people together. I guess our Winter Games are kind of special because we saw teams parade in and there were whole families on teams. There were moms and dads and kids that were on some of the teams in various sports.

One of the things that we're looking at now, Chair, is instead of that just being an event that happens every three years and in the fall people started practising and training for different things and then the games happen in March, let's not lose sight and let's not let that fall off. How do we work with groups like Aboriginal Sport Circle to have some of these programs that are running all of the time so that the focus is not just on wellness every three years?

I'm looking forward this weekend, I'm sure my colleague is as well, to getting back to

seeing some of the final events at the games. But it is all about healthy living.

I also want to do a shout-out to Cain's Quest while I'm on my feet. A tremendous opportunity to showcase the beauty of the North. Teams that come from as far away as Finland, from BC, Alberta. We had a difficult time this year, the racers. We had a lot of rain and some lost snowmobiles and went through open brooks. Thank God there was no loss of life. But, again, I think even though the race didn't finish, I would say they all came out a winner. We do look forward, the province, the provincial government will be there to support the organizing committee when they have other Cain's Quest events into the fall.

Also, sometimes all we think about here in the House and talk about are the difficult times, but there are lots of things to be hopeful about as well, Chair. When I look to Labrador, I could take an hour to talk about how resource-rich we are in minerals, the direction we're going in that.

Indigenous tourism is a new passion for me. I'm just coming out of a conference in Winnipeg, the largest in the world, 1,100 participants. What's encouraging is that all the other areas around the world, what they're doing, we have the potential to do that in Labrador. We have it to build upon. I've taken an interest, I attended last year; I went again this year. We have our new Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association doing some good work. We're going to continue to build on that.

I think right now as we navigate this really difficult time, we know that we're at a 40-year, cost-of-living high for all kinds of reasons: the war in Ukraine, the sanctions in Russia. But our budget, I'm confident our Minister of Finance is going to have lot of nuggets in the budget that will give people a chance to be hopeful, that we're going to be in a better place in the not-too-distant future.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I'm recognizing the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you so much, Chair.

I hadn't planned on starting with the sugar tax but it slipped in. I'd just like to spend a few minutes at the sugar tax. I'd like to tell everyone who's listening, and the Opposition who spoke passionately about supporting the tax, is that we believe that we consume too much sugar. We ought to get a handle on our sugar consumption. We're all on the same page, all 40 of us. The reasons for the taxation is probably something that we would differ on.

I would say to you, you implement a tax; we would say there ought to be a poverty reduction strategy that you ought to be espousing because you're receiving and you're bringing in money and you're saying well we're going to take in the money, but we're going to put it right back to address those that would be in a situation where they have low incomes.

What we hope the budget would have on the 23rd, it would be a poverty reduction plan so that when the Member opposite stated that students that need something to eat, I would give it every time. Every one of us would. But what we've got to eliminate is those children that are living in poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador so we don't need to throw money at them, they are self-sufficient and they've got the means in order to acquire a healthy lifestyle.

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

**C. PARDY:** Right now, they do not. If we're talking about a quarter of the children ages one to six live in poverty and the best we can throw out at them in a budget is a sugar tax, think about it. Think about that.

So, yes, we are all on the same page. The only thing I would say to you is that it's not to tax those that would be less fortunate or those that can't afford it, that's the ones we need to support the most. Take in; give out. I would say have a poverty reduction strategy that's going to address the issue, have a better education program in our school system that's going to teach them that a can of pop with 16 teaspoons of sugar ought to be left on the shelf. Use the education and enhance our comprehensive school health. That's it.

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

**C. PARDY:** One last thing. The Premier stood yesterday, and when my hon. Member for Stephenville - Port au Port said: axe the tax. Are you going to axe the tax? He responded – and we've been asking for a lot of research to come forth– well, he had mentioned the UK. You just heard it because it was just mentioned here in the House before I spoke. He mentioned the UK.

I wouldn't mind tabling the latest edition of *The Economist*, which is a reputable publication, and it talks about the reduction in life expectancy in the UK. They're in a whole host of problems in the UK and if that's where we're drawing our research from, maybe we need to have some other research that we're drawing from in order to validate what action we take.

I would think ministers would've received a copy of that latest edition of *The Economist*. Life expectancy has dropped down amongst the poorest in their population. No different in Newfoundland and Labrador. The ones with the health concerns, or the majority of them, would be those that are not having enough of the basic income to be able to look after and support their needs in order to have a healthy lifestyle.

That is government's responsibility to have a poverty reduction strategy and plan that would change the course of what we see. I

would hope that that will be occurring in the budget that we will see and have a look at on the 23rd. We look forward to seeing that.

Yesterday, I presented a petition. Remember, we want to reduce poverty. We want to make sure that we leave more money in people's pockets so they can look after themselves and have a healthier lifestyle. Yesterday, I presented a petition where the federal government would index their contributions and it's indexed. Year after year they give out more to the population who would be in need in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Families with young children, seniors who live in the province, they increase. Our formula, the government's formula is locked into 2016 with no indexing. What happens is that we keep that base amount, so when the federal government increases the amount of money going out to our residents, what happens to the provincial government? We pull it back because our formula and our calculator is not indexed.

So that flies in the face of what we talked about, whether it be the sugar tax and, the gist of it, we're talking about reducing poverty, allowing people to have a financial resource that they can better look after themselves to be in a healthier state. Anything that you do that works against it, we ought to be able to call it out. I would say that is something that ought to be looked at and maybe we'll see that in the budget on the 23rd as well –

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

**C. PARDY:** – where the formula you use will be indexed and we won't be pulling more money back from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as the federal government increases their amount.

In my short amount of time, I want to mention about driver's education and seniors who may be faced with a driving suspension. I had a gentleman who walked

in my office on Friday and I know the sensitivity when it comes to drivers, but let me explain this situation to you. We had a gentleman who suffered a stroke, a senior, last summer. He has recovered quite nicely. He walked in the office – my first time meeting him was Friday – but he knew that he was in trouble with his licence and getting them back.

During the session that we had, he told me that he was visiting his wife who was in the long-term care at Golden Heights Manor in Bonavista. So the taxi just dropped him off to my office in Bonavista. I offered him, after he explained the situation, a ride back home where he had a car in his driveway and he would like to get his licence back.

He reports that his doctor will stand by him and sign the medical form to state that he has his health enough to be able to return to drive. What he's faced with is that he had to go, before he came to my office, to get a driver's evaluation up in Clarendville, an area that really he's not overly used to. He hasn't been on the Trans-Canada driving for several years.

Well, when he went for that driver's examination, here are the three points of which he failed. He drifted from one side to the other – maybe the potholes. Speed maintenance was not consistent. Keep in mind, a new area. He doesn't drive up on this area; he hasn't been on the Trans-Canada for some years. Not using his signal and vision scan to check traffic.

I would say to you, if we've got seniors in Bonavista, the driver's evaluator would often travel to Bonavista and have them in their familiar territory to be able to see as to whether they have the competency to drive. What we do now is we don't send the driver evaluator to Bonavista. We have to go up into an area for the seniors to be reevaluated and assessed on a stretch of road on the Trans-Canada where these people wish not to be a part of anyhow. Two cases that we had where that was the case.

In the Health Accord, we talk about ageism. We talk about ageism and we talk about discrimination with our seniors. If somebody is not suitable for the road, they ought not to be on the road but if you've got a senior that their medical doctor gives them full clearance to say they're suitable, they should have it.

Thank you very much, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair is recognizing the hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair.

It sure is awesome to always be back here in our hon. House here at the House of Assembly to speak. The noise level is quite high all of the time, Mr. Chair. I always find it hard to hear myself talk let alone, I imagine, the job that you have. I must say it always is great to be back here and to be back for the spring session and, of course, I always appreciate the support that the people of Harbour Grace and Port de Grave always show me. I am really grateful for that and I'll always do everything I can on their behalf in every regard and every matter.

That said, I want to start this off by talking about something that's relevant and we can all appreciate in this House, especially MHAs outside of the metro areas, of course, and that's the wonderful roads plan that was recently announced by my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. It's unprecedented of \$225 million and that's going to be roadwork across our beautiful Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair.

I am happy to say that in that announcement some significant roadwork that we're going to get done in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, in particular Route 70 through Bay Roberts. Those of you who are familiar, of course, it is the main

business district here in Conception Bay North. I always proudly say that Bay Roberts is the hub of Conception Bay North with a lot of businesses, a lot of traffic, there are multiple schools there, a lot of activity in the fishery, our local fishery and we're going to get that road done from the L. T. Stick Drive area, all the way to up and inclusive to Water Street, Bay Roberts.

So that will be greatly appreciated by residents. I know it has been brought to my attention for quite some time and I've been advocating and I'm happy to say this government is going to get it done this summer. So I look forward to hosting my colleague when he comes actually to our strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. We're going to make that announcement a local announcement in Bay Roberts. Also, I'm happy to say that we're going to fix the roads and repair the roads from Bareneed Road to Port de Grave.

I'd be remiss, of course, if I didn't talk about the strength of Port de Grave and how it contributes to the overall Newfoundland economy annually through our fishery. We're known in Port de Grave for our boat lighting, of course, during the Christmas season but, of course, for the very strong fishery in Port de Grave. So that's welcomed news and, of course, welcomed work for roadwork.

There are also other priority areas. I'm happy to say we're just finishing up Harvey Street in Harbour Grace. That was done in two phases, Chair, because, of course, the amount of work that had to go into that. The underground infrastructure had to be replaced prior to placing the new pavement. Residents have made that clear to me as a priority prior to my election, actually, to the House of Assembly in 2015, and I'm happy to say we've got that done. So sometimes it takes a bit of time, but we work together and we get it done. I really can't wait to see this great work that's going to be happening this summer and I know that's welcomed to all

residents across our beautiful province because we do have a lot to be proud of here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On that note, I was happy to actually travel recently to the United Nations just last week, to New York, for the 67th Commission on the Status of Women. Certainly what an honour that was and an experience to join the table, for leaders around the globe, women and gender-diverse people from all over the world to come together to talk about the priorities that face women and girls and gender-diverse people. I always say we've done significant work, but there will always be much more improvements and work that we can do.

So that was a wonderful experience. I was part of the Canadian delegation. I had some great meetings with the hon. Marci Ien, the federal minister for Women and Gender Equality, as well as the parliamentary secretary, Jenna Sudds, and I was actually invited to join Parliamentary Secretary Sudds on the main floor of the United Nations to give the Canadian address in the ministerial round table, so it was wonderful.

It was great also to bring our priorities and to share experience with our counterparts across the globe and to learn from them. Of course, it's an eye-opener and I guess a bit of a cold comfort to say that the problems or the challenges rather that we experience here in our province is certainly not unique to us. Just hearing some of the delegates talk, in particular from Tanzania and those areas, women and girls don't have access, the same access even to the internet. It was a theme actually of the digital age at this session, the 67th session.

So it was wonderful and I look forward to certainly sharing that experience and what we've learned there to take back and to work here and to put on the ground here in our province. Also, I want to give a recognition also to other Members who did travel from Newfoundland and Labrador to

the United Nations. Odelle Pike, who is the chair of the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, also travelled for this session and she gave a presentation on reconciliation. That was significant. She's doing a wonderful job. She is a very strong woman leader here in our province located out in Stephenville. So hats off to her.

Also, the Canadian Federation of University Women here, the St. John's club, they travelled. Our very own, as well, Jessica McCormick was there from the Federation of Labour. So it's important to recognize the hard work and the strives made by women of all stripes and colours, because as we know – and I think, we can all relate to in here – the barriers that women and gender-diverse people face, they're not partisan. There's no border, I guess, or rather it goes across party lines is what I'm trying to say. It's important, of course, to be unanimous and stick together.

On that note, Chair, I'm also happy to give an update on our pay equity legislation. I'm happy to say that the platform is live. That's done through Public Engagement, EngageNL. I really encourage everyone from this province who wants to contribute their input on the legislation with regard to pay equity and pay transparency. I'm also happy to say that we will be having the live consultations with targeted stakeholders that will be starting in the coming weeks across Newfoundland and Labrador. It's important to get this legislation right. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues from across the way in the Official Opposition who did support this and who are working with us to do that, because that's important to get that stuff done.

Lots of great things happening, of course. I look forward to the budget that's going to be coming down next week. Also, we know the federal budget is coming shortly after that. We're always striving to do everything that we can to support the people of the province, Chair. Again, I go back to my

district, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. I hear from constituents regularly.

I also want to acknowledge my constituency assistant, Lisa Brown, who works tirelessly day in and day out to take those calls on the front line. Of course, when I can't be at an event, she's there on my behalf. So we have to certainly acknowledge, respect and be grateful for the support from our constituency assistants.

I look forward to the good news that will come from that budget; in particular, the roads. I can't emphasize that enough. I mean roads and health care are certainly something that I hear about frequently, arguably the main topics in politics and in government here in Newfoundland and Labrador. But we're going to get that work done, so Route 70 in Bay Roberts, again through the main business district there in Bay Roberts, as well as Port de Grave.

Some other priority locations are Bryant's Cove Road in particular. I hope that the town clerk is listening in Bryant's Cove because that's something that they've been advocating for. This road actually joins Upper Island Cove as well as Bryant's Cove, it's a main thoroughfare, but certainly it would be great to see some repairs there. So I look forward to when those contracts are awarded and when they get out. I think we all can here across the House of Assembly.

On that note I will take my seat. I look forward to the debate and how important it is. I know we're all going to support the Interim Supply, how important it is as has been outlined by our Finance Minister and Deputy Premier. It's important to keep those bills paid to keep the payroll going while our debates continue here in our Legislature.

It's always great to be back here in the spring session. I look forward to working with everybody in the House of Assembly. On that note, Chair, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** I'm recognizing the Member for Harbour Main.

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

I must say it's an honour to stand here in the House of Assembly and speak on behalf of the constituents of the District of Harbour Main, who I proudly serve and who are my inspiration every day to continue this fight.

Chair, it is nothing short of a fight in many ways. I look at the issues when we look at health care, just health care alone. First of all, considering how much money is spent on health care in Newfoundland and Labrador, in terms of the amount of expenditures we're looking at over \$3 billion, it's 39.9 per cent. Almost 40 per cent of the entire expenditure of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador – almost 40 per cent. It begs the question why things are not better than what they are. Things ought to be better than what they are, so why isn't it working?

I look at so many issues. I don't even know where to begin, but I'll start with the ones that are dearest to the hearts of the constituents of Harbour Main and that, first of all, when we look at the ER closures in Whitbourne. We saw a delegation of residents from Whitbourne and the surrounding area who are very concerned about what's happening in the area in Whitbourne. They are concerned about what happens if they show up to the urgent care clinic – we see that there's an announcement of an urgent care clinic.

What happens in the middle of a medical emergency, Chair? The people and the residents of Whitbourne and the surrounding area, which includes many of the constituents of Harbour Main, whether it be in North River, South River, Clarke's

Beach, Makinsons, Roaches Line, Cupids. I've even spoke – when I attended the protest in Whitbourne a couple of weeks ago there was someone there from Harbour Main. These people are impacted when the ER is closed in this facility.

So why is it that we're seeing this? I mean, we see so many issues, but the closure of the ER – I think you can look at what the fire chief in Whitbourne had stated, Jamie Budden. He says: "sick or injured people in his area must travel much farther since the local emergency room closed 'temporarily' last June" – "temporarily" being the operative word – "and never opened back up. The distance also ties up ambulances for longer, which can add even more time to a patient's wait for critical care ...."

He, as a first responder in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, says he's not surprised by the data, which said that there was a 24 per cent jump in emergency department deaths. He wasn't surprised and many – I'm sure if we asked our first responders, who we may be hearing from tomorrow with respect to the PMR that we are presenting, they are not surprised when they hear that there's a jump of 24 per cent in 2022 from the previous year. That is a startling fact, Mr. Chair, a startling fact; 24 per cent jump in emergency department deaths.

There's no wonder that residents are stressed. There's no wonder that they're under considerable strain. It's no wonder that they are concerned and asking what's going to be done. We saw the presence of many of the residents today.

That is, of course, an important issue, but there are so many other issues. Not only the closure of the Whitbourne emergency, but all across the province we're seeing this happening. We're seeing a doctor shortage. We're seeing long-term care problems and empty beds. We're seeing a nurse shortage. We're seeing radiation therapists leaving the province. We're seeing respiratory therapists leaving the province. We're

seeing backlog of services and appointments, people waiting who are sick and who are suffering. They're waiting for appointments that are months in advance. We are seeing a mental health care system that, again, has so many delays. They are almost unbelievable in terms of the delays. Months, even years for individuals, for patients, who need to access mental health care.

We look at the ambulance situation for example. We know that that is also a very serious problem within parts of rural Newfoundland and Labrador in particular, in terms of there being access to ambulances in a timely matter. We see, of course, all of this affects rural Newfoundland as well, Mr. Chair.

So let's start with the one issue because there are so many, I don't know where to go in terms of which one has priority, they are so important, but we see the emergency closures. But let's look at the doctor shortage.

We know the facts are this: 136,000 people in our province are without a family physician. We also know another fact, that over 10,000 people lost access to family doctors since the spring of last year. We know that the number of people without a family doctor increased 36 per cent since 2021. Things are not getting better, Chair, they are getting worse. These are serious issues. The alarm bells must be ringing and they have been ringing for some time, but they are not getting better.

This situation is not getting better; it's getting worse. What is being done? Whatever the government is doing right now, Mr. Chair, is not working. I just speak to this from what I'm hearing from my constituents who tell me first-hand.

But let's look at what RNs say, for example. Registered nurses, the RN association, they say the same thing as well. Let me quote from the Registered Nurses' Union

Newfoundland and Labrador. This was February 23, 2022, Mr. Chair, they indicated then there were 752 registered nurses vacancies in Newfoundland and Labrador. A 22 per cent increase in only a six-month period from 615 in April of 2022.

But what do the nurses say? What does this reputable organization say to fix the health care crisis? We need to fix the nursing shortage. We need more RNs to open long-term care beds. Not only to open long-term care beds, we need to see more staffing at long-term care facilities so we don't face the violent situation that we've seen cropping up in different long-term care homes. We need to see more RNs to open long-term care beds, to address the backlog of surgeries and procedures and to improve wait times in our emergency rooms.

But the head of the RN indicated, the Registered Nurses' Union Newfoundland and Labrador, that the dramatic and rapid increase in RN vacancies is only going to get worse.

So it's not only my constituents that fear this, and I'm sure that it is being feared by others throughout the province, but when we look at the head of the RN Union of Newfoundland and Labrador talking about the dramatic and rapid increase in RN vacancies and that it's only going to get worse if the provincial government doesn't act now to address retention and protect patient care. It wasn't only about retention and protection, but it's about retaining the incredible hard-working RNs who are currently providing health care in our province.

So, Chair, there are so many issues. I will be speaking further on this. I want to talk more about the backlog of services and what I'm hearing from my constituents about rural access and fair access. We have to do better. It is not working. It is out of control. We can see it from the issues that are facing all of us.



Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair is recognizing the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

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

I'm going to stand and speak on something very serious out in the district that I've brought up on several occasions. I'm bringing it up for the attention to show the seriousness of it out in the Western Memorial Regional Hospital for people coming in.

Mr. Chair, I mentioned several times about the number of people on the wait-list to get in to do the dye test here in St. John's as they call it. We've made several inquiries and I know the Member for St. George's - Humber is well aware of one or two that you had. I'm just going to read, Mr. Chair, and I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is going to listen to this because he may be involved with the air ambulance part of it and the Minister of Health and Community Services, Mr. Chair.

The Minister of Health and Community Services said earlier today in Question Period that if someone is having a serious heart attack, they should go to the Health Sciences to be properly assessed. There's no doubt that the minister is sincere in that. Absolutely, no doubt.

I just want to read into the record, and I won't read any names but I will show, if the Minister of Health and Community Services and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure want a copy of this email. I won't use any names in it for privacy or even the staffs' names that we got it. I'll read it: Hello, Judy Bolt. I'm following up with the program manager and I am able to provide the following information. The manager had a phone conversation with the husband regarding his wife on Thursday, March 9, 2023 and provided him with an

update and an overview of the challenges. This was in relation to an earlier client relation inquiry last week. I checked this morning to seek an update based on the inquiry received from MHA Eddie Joyce's office and have been advised that challenges unfortunately continue.

The lady continues to wait for an air ambulance as of this morning. There is recognition that wait times exceed the recommended wait time; however, given the volume of clients waiting for the procedures as well as the high number of clients waiting for transfer, the wait-list is constantly kept in view and ever changing in response to the needs of the complexities.

As we speak today, there are 10 people on the list. This lady that is referred to is in for 19 days; there is one person in Corner Brook right now for 35 days. The problem is transportation by air ambulance to get into St. John's.

This is a serious issue. I would ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Minister of Health and Community Services – and I will show you the actual email on it. On behalf of the people of client services in community health, they do a great job keeping us informed and helping us to pass on to the people exactly the status and the reasons why. So this is no reflection on any of the workers there.

This is so serious that after making inquiries and one person in Western Memorial Regional Hospital for 35 days and mainly the reason is the transportation from Western Health to St. John's by air ambulance. There is a problem; it is a serious problem.

There are other things that happened out in Western Newfoundland concerning people in the hospital waiting to come in to do the dye test. I won't speak about it; it is serious. I won't speak about it, but I can privately. I ask the two ministers that if you want to see this email, if you want to see how serious it

is in Western Newfoundland, this coming from the minister's own department. I'll say to the Minister of Health and Community Services, this is coming from your department and they're apologizing – it is not their fault, absolutely not their fault – they're doing a great job to keep myself and Judy updated so we can pass on to the clients who come to our office, and one or two in particular aren't even from our district, four or five aren't even from our district.

This is a serious issue and this is an issue that crosses party lines. I know the Member for Corner Brook is probably getting inquiries because some of them are from Corner Brook, some are from St. George's - Humber also and he's aware of it. This one was the person, 19 days. The reason why is air ambulance.

This is a serious issue. I won't speak any further on it. I won't even speak on another issue. I'll take my seat, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to explain how serious this is and here's the email from the minister's department that people are out there with the stress and strain who are admitted to hospital staying at the hospital in Corner Brook and they can't get in because of the air ambulance and other issues that are related.

I'm pleading with both ministers to look at this on a serious note, which I know you will. Absolutely I know you will. When it comes to bantering back and forth I understand, but when it comes to life and death I know those two people will take this seriously, look at it and see what they can do.

I'll take my seat, Mr. Chair, and if they want to have a look at the emails, I'll let them read the emails. I took out the names of the people themselves. I scratched out their names, but I can show you the email that came in and the reason why.

I'll take my seat and I hope the two ministers will take this on a serious note,

which I know you will, and see what you can do to help alleviate some of the stress and strain of the people in Corner Brook and not just Humber - Bay of Islands, some are from Humber - Bay of Islands, but from Western Newfoundland to try and get them in at least so that no tragedy will happen.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's once again a pleasure to stand in this House and speak on anything, of course. This time of year we're speaking on Interim Supply which gives a little bit of a wider range. We can talk on many issues, but ultimately every issue we talk on is all related to our budget, I guess. The hardest things in life come through the budget process; it costs money, as we know, most things. Our wish list in every district in the province has a price tag attached. I'm aware of that, as I'm sure we all are.

When I speak, the first thing that comes to mind is an issue that I've talked about a lot and I'm probably going to make more public noise about it or bring more attention to the issue. I have a district in Conception Bay South that is the second-largest municipality in the province with almost 28,000 people and I have nothing.

I'm hearing Members in the House on all sides talk about how they have a hospital, that the emergency room was closed, or they have some clinics, and those are serious issues. We're fighting for that, too. You have other shortcomings, you have to go this far for blood services or you have to go this way for testing, which we can envision a district of that size has nothing. When I say nothing, it's nothing. There's a fee-for-service blood collection, but I also have no public transit.

So even though Conception Bay South is grouped into this metro region and to someone that don't know the difference, you're thinking that you're much like Mount Pearl or Paradise or over around Clovelly, you're not. Ironically, the majority of Conception Bay South, my district especially, is rural. So if you've got to get to a medical appointment at St. Clare's, there's a 35- to 40-minute drive for the majority of my district. There's no public transit. If you haven't got a family member to drive you or a friend or you're married or you have children, you can't get there.

So there's no difference in taking me and putting me out in rural Newfoundland in a remote area and telling me I've got to find my best way to get to the hospital. You look at the Whitbourne situation and it's ranged from 15 to 20 to 30 to an hour in proximity when you look at the greater region. Conception Bay South is really no different. But the magnitude of it is you've got 28,000 people. So where do they go? You've got that compounded by one of the highest family doctor shortages in the province is in my district. I know the minister may not agree or he may have different numbers, but these are numbers we have gotten from the NLMA that says CBS is one of the highest percentages without family doctors.

So where do you go? They got no family doctor, there's no collaborative care clinic, there's no urgent care clinic, there's no medical centre and there's no testing. They have to find their best way to get to one of the two main hospitals here in St. Johns, the Health Sciences or St. Clare's. How do you get there? Most don't. You've got a medical transportation program that doesn't suit Conception Bay South. So I've got seniors and low-income people, they can't get there because they got to have eight appointments a month or they've got to be living within an excess of 60 kilometres – another barrier.

So everywhere I turn in my district, it's barrier after barrier after barrier and

obstacle for people to get what we all rightfully should get and deserve. I know, Mr. Chair, you just recently have a new hospital in your district and no question, I think it was the previous government, our government, that approved that hospital so no one ever questioned it. I don't think we did anyway. We never, along the way, did we ever debate against it.

But my district is not much different than your district in the sense, but most people think my district is metro; it's not. I see announcements coming and hear announcements coming. Today is a prime example. I'm in conversation with the minister, and I'm going to talk to him further, about urgent care centres. There were plans to have an announcement, which was today, for in the metro region. But guess what? CBS is not included. My district is not included in the boundaries for that announcement today. Conception Bay South is not in the map. On the map, CBS was left out.

So where do I go? Where do I tell my constituents to go? Carbonear, Health Sciences or St. Clare's? And again, this is an issue I'm going to make more headway with as time goes on. This is the largest pocket of people outside the City of St. John's in the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. You may get something next year. I may never get anything.

That's not right. That's not acceptable to the people of this province, or to my district. Maybe we have the wrong political stripe up there. I have questioned that many times in this House over various things. Maybe if I was on the government side, we'd be announcing a new collaborative care clinic for CBS or a new health centre, I don't know. I don't think I need a hospital. I think I need something that can get people two things, two-fold. You have to find a way to get them to access the services and you have to find some immediate service to the

area. You shouldn't have to be clogging up emergency rooms.

You look at those people – I would hazard to guess that you go out to a lot of those emergency rooms on a weekly basis and do your data. I know the minister talks about Patient Connect. Most people in my district don't know if that's fit to eat, but they do know when they go to the emergency rooms and they can't get in through the door – because I'm telling you, a lot of those people at emergency room, stogging that up, they're from Conception Bay South. They have no choice, if they're lucky enough to get there.

So it's frustrating from a standpoint where I'm to. I'm not on *Open Line* every day bashing government that they done wrong on this issue; I'm not. I mean, I can do that on times and I've done it in the past on different issues, whatever I feel, but this is an issue of importance and it's a sensitive issue but it's one that's common sense. I say this in all due respect, how can any official – and I know the minister and all ministers over there they take advice from officials when they do their homework. How can any official not look at Conception Bay South and look at it and say oh yeah, maybe down the road. There's no big urgent need up there. I can't envision it, but I know communities of 5,000 people and people are out on the streets demanding health care services. I have 28,000 and we got nothing.

Not that I've been quiet about it, absolutely not. I've also understood the finances of the province and the difficult times we were going through, and you can't get too over the top. A few years ago, I tried to get as much roadwork done as I could because the roads weren't fit to drive over. Thankfully a lot of that was accomplished by a former minister of Transportation and Infrastructure who was a great help to me in that process. I complimented him many times over the years on it.

But, as time moves on, I have bigger problems. He's not here in the House to take credit again. Anyway, I have bigger problems and they're health care issues and they're access to health care. But I also realize too government are doing pretty good financially, it appears. That's what I hear a lot. The Premier says everything has changed dramatically, we're doing much better and times are good. In saying that I also realize on the backdrop to some of that, when he announced that, there are lot of things behind and burning and erupting behind. There are flames shooting up, but we're doing great.

I'm being cynical and I'm talking out of the side of my mouth when I say that with a grin. That's the way I feel. Because I don't think we're doing great. Do I think our financial situation has improved? Yes, okay, fair enough. Surpluses, everyone is happy about that. Do I think we're doing great as a province? No, we have a long, long, long road ahead.

It's fine to say those things. Whether they're valid or not, that's for the public to decide. I always say that's for the electorate to decide. But from where I'm sitting, that's not what I'm seeing. I'm seeing the province has improved its financial position, but we have a lot of work to do.

Mr. Chair, there this morning I went out on the steps of the Confederation Building and there were a crowd of people assembled from Whitbourne. That's detached from me, per se, as my district. No interference with me other than as an elected Member and you went out to show your support.

When I came in the only thing that struck me was – and I said to one of our staff – it amazes me in 2023 we're stood on the front steps and people are out with the placards demanding 24-hour care in their emergency rooms, wants their emergency room open for 24 hours a day. That's really sad to see that. This is really sad when you look at that and you see the look in their eyes. They

were respectful, they're all out there, they're out for the right cause, but this day and age and on the backdrop of the Premier telling the province we're doing great and everything is in great shape, we're doing wonderful.

The minister made an announcement the other day about urgent care. These people don't want urgent care; they want 24-hour care. They want the emergency room open 24 hours a day. They don't want another tragedy happen that we've seen in recent times. There are sad tragedies, sad stories.

Would the emergency room help those people? Well, I'll tell you, it may not have kept them alive, but it definitely would've gone a long way to helping them. We don't know. We're not doctors. I'm not a doctor. But by going to an emergency room door and the lights are off and the doors are locked, that's a really sad situation to be in in our province. We've seen that happening right across the board. I know it's a human resource issue partly, but government has to take account to the situation and do right by the people of the province. Don't mind me or the Tories; do what's right for the people of this province.

Thank you very much.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Shall the resolution carry?  
All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**E. JOYCE:** One second now, I've got an unfinished speech.

**CHAIR:** The Chair is recognizing the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

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

I'm just going to stand and have another few words, it almost ended and this is why –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I raised a couple of issues, Mr. Chair, and one of them yesterday was the nurse practitioners. I asked again to the minister and I asked again for the people in Western Newfoundland who don't have a doctor. If they don't have a doctor, can we find some way to offer incentives for nurse practitioners to try to get them to alleviate the concerns of people who need their prescriptions filled, or some reason have to have a doctor appointment, they need some referral for blood work or something?

I'm asking again for the department if there is any way the Minister of Health and Community Services, because now a lot of seniors who are coming to the office are saying that yes, they have to pay \$55, \$60 and if we can help in some way to alleviate the concerns, put an office and put – there are lots of office space there, government space in Corner Brook that we can do this. If we can get people going to see nurse practitioners, that's going to take care of the overload on the emergency department in Corner Brook.

For some reason, I'm not sure why we won't do it as a government. I'm not sure why. I just don't know why. There are people willing to do it: nurse practitioners. There are people asking that it can be done. The need is there. When the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health and Community Services say we're looking for new ideas, here's one new idea where you can have

three more people, three or four, you can go up to five or six, to help with the doctor shortage. If you help with the doctor shortage in Western Newfoundland, especially Corner Brook and the Bay of Islands and the Humber Valley region, you're going to take care of a lot of concerns that you have in the emergency department. It's an easy solution.

It is a solution that is so doable that a lot of the seniors that call are very upset that they've got to pay and try to get online to book an appointment with the nurse practitioners now who are doing it on their own, can't bill MCP.

That's the other thing. I asked the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board if she can stand up and explain why; I asked the minister in writing, the Minister of Health and Community Services. Why can't nurse practitioners bill MCP? Why can't they bill MCP? There's got to be a way that we could do that. There has to be a way that we can do that. There has never been a solid reason to come back and say why we can't do that. So the seniors who now book an appointment with nurse practitioners, you keep paying, but if you go see a doctor, your fee is covered. There has to be a way.

I say to the ministers over there listening, even if you hire them through Western Health and put them in an office, put them in an office space outside the hospital, they can see patients. There are ways around it. There are nurse practitioners now that are being hired down in Bonavista – two more. There are some out in Western Newfoundland, some in Labrador. Hire them through the health authority and allow them. So if they can give prescriptions, which is part of the health care system, why do you have to pay for it? There has got to be a way that we can get around that. There's got to be.

I say to the government, we're always talking about the great budget that's coming up – stay tuned for the budget, you've got to

vote for the budget. How can you vote for a budget when there are 800 seniors in Western Newfoundland who need cataract surgery? With the click of the pen, just one signature, that can be taken care of and it's not done. But yet, you've got to say, well, vote for the budget, it's a great budget. You've got seniors here now going to – mainly seniors, a lot aren't seniors – the nurse practitioner and then all of a sudden saying oh, you've got to pay for this, but if you had a family doctor, you don't have to pay. If you get lucky enough to get to emergency, after 12, 14 hours, you don't have to pay.

There has got to be a way that we can get around that, Mr. Chair. There just has to be a way to get around that. I say to a lot of Members opposite, they heard me talk about cataracts and I won't drop it. I absolutely won't drop it. If I've got to keep hounding on it, if I've got to keep bringing it up in the House of Assembly because there are a lot of districts over there who are affected. A lot of districts are affected with that, by the 800 people in Western Newfoundland, mainly seniors.

We heard the Member for Bonavista today bringing up about the drivers for seniors. Great story, a good issue that you brought up. Can you imagine how many of those seniors now, of those 800 seniors in Western Newfoundland right now, can't even go take their test because they have cataracts? Can't even go. They're in their house depending on somebody else. Hopefully, they have family members to bring them out to get their groceries. Hopefully, they have family members to bring them to the doctor's appointments. Hopefully, they have family members to bring them to social gatherings so that they don't become isolated.

There's a study out that of people who develop cataracts, I think it's a 31 or 32 per cent chance that they're going to develop dementia, a higher percentage with dementia because of cataracts. Why the

government for some reason wants to penalize, make those seniors in Western Newfoundland suffer, going through the motion when we're all here to help people. Why they want to put them in the range of 30 per cent who may develop dementia, because we won't fix the cataracts with a stroke of the pen like we just gave 3,000 to St. John's but none – 300, sorry, to Western Newfoundland, there's something fundamentally wrong.

I know the Minister of Health and Community Services, one phone call he can get the wait-list. He knows about the wait-list. Western Memorial has the wait-list. Health and Community Services has the wait-list but here's the problem. You want to talk about a cat-and-mouse game here's the problem. The only problem with this is you're dealing with people's lives. Here's the problem.

If Western Health got the wait-list and they gave it to the Department of Health and Community Services, what happens is the wait time then, which is 112 – the national benchmark goes up, because there's 800 more and it's not going to be within the benchmark, the rest. That is the problem.

You will not accept that report. You know it's there. The intake officer in the APEX building has it. Western Memorial is well aware of it. The Department of Health is well aware of it, but they won't put it in the records because the wait time, the national benchmark then, instead of for the ones just on wait-list one, which already seen the referral, it's 112 days. If they took another 800 to 900, put them in, the wait time would go up to probably 200 or 300 days and it looks bad.

That's why they will not recognize the wait-list. It's shameful. It's actually shameful and I can't say it any plainer than that. I can tell you, there are a lot of Members over there opposite that speak to me privately and they know. They know it's there. Absolutely, they know it's there. I can assure you that if any

of them ever wants to go out and get the statistics from Western Health, they can get them.

So I know when I hear people say, oh, cataracts again, but when you're dealing with seniors who are calling in and saying I just lost my licence, can social services help me pay for a taxi because I can't drive anymore? Do you know anybody that delivers groceries to my house that I can get? When you get those types of calls, Mr. Chair, you're fighting for those people who are less fortunate and the problem with it.

When we see in the crowd a group from Whitbourne up here – we've seen the group from Whitbourne up here today – they can mobilize, they can drive. This is why you haven't got a great mobilization of people with cataracts in Western Newfoundland because they can't get out and protest on their own. They can't even drive; they have to get a ride to it. But you go out and ask them, go out and look at the list, go out and seek the information and bring it back to Cabinet.

I say to the Minister of Finance, when she's talking about a great budget that's going to come up and the Minister of Health and Community Services is saying, well, you may have to vote for the budget: Is there going to be cataract surgeries in Western Newfoundland? It doesn't cost any extra money. The money is there. It's just having the will to do it.

But is the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board going to ensure that it's going to be done, if there's any additional money needed, which it's not, then it's going to be in the budget? If it is, I'll vote for the budget. I'll vote for the budget if you get rid of the 800 – on basic fundamental, I can't vote for the budget if I know there are 800 seniors that can be taken care of that's not.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR (Trimper):** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you Mr. Chair.

It's certainly always a privilege to stand in the House of Assembly and represent the great District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. I think one of the speakers – I think it was on this side, but I know we all say the same thing in terms of our constituency assistant; I have one of the best. I know we all consider we have one of the best. Her name is Verna and I thank her for her endless time that she puts into the district.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** When I go out there and people say you have one of the best, you know she's doing her work as well. Really, they're the heartbeat for all of us in terms of what they do. I don't think they're recognized enough. So I want to recognize my CA, but I'm sure I speak on behalf of everybody that's here.

I spent the last week out in my district, and to talk about health care, I think we all recognize that we all have the same challenges in our districts when it comes to shortages of doctors. This is where I want to pivot a little bit in terms of doctors and what the health care system, especially in rural parts of the province, will look like in the future because there is uncertainty around the health care system, but we have a Health Accord plan that I believe is directing us in the right direction in terms of health care and how it will look years down the road.

I say in terms of doctors, doctors need the supports. They need nurse practitioners. They need LPNs. They need nurses, paramedics, EMRs because that's the foundation of the health care system. Without those supports, then a doctor, he or she, can't go into rural parts of the province

or any part of the province and deliver a good health care system. So I want to say how those positions beneath, I guess, a doctor or doctors is very important.

I know we don't talk about it enough and that's the fishery –

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

**E. LOVELESS:** – because in my district I'm honoured and privileged to have two parts of fishery being aquaculture that houses two fish plants, employs a lot of people. I always say to the fishermen, and I met with a bunch of them on the wharf in Harbour Breton last week, that we'll never forget the traditional fishery because we were founded on it. You know, just chatting with them on the wharves last week, infrastructure is an issue for them. I told them, even though it's a federal responsibility, it doesn't matter. It's important, the community of Harbour Breton and the region, there's a lot of money that comes out of that community and I told them I'll be there for them in terms of their infrastructure ask.

I met with seniors' groups, Lions Clubs. We have an orange black lodge in Harbour Breton. I met with those that are still running, those organizations, and they're important to the communities. We don't realize how important they are and certainly met with town councils to hear what their concerns are moving forward.

I also want to recognize youth because we have some young people here that are Pages and the youth are our future. In my district, we have people that attended Canada Games from volleyball to badminton and table tennis to ice hockey and many other sports. We have a lot of talent like many regions of the province do. As a government, we will continue to support our youth because I believe it's important, not just from an athletic perspective, but from their academic perspective as well because I believe both go hand in hand. We have CYN



organizations who play a very important role in our communities as well. We support them as a government and we'll continue to do that.

Today, I had the privilege of speaking to a Grade 4 class, Jennifer Hatcher's class in Harbour Breton of St. Joseph's Elementary and they posed some questions to me. They posed questions about doctors. They posed questions to me about what led me to the path of politics. It was a great conversation. I encouraged them to sit in the front of the class and ask questions because it's a part of your development, where you will end up after Grade 12 or wherever your path will lead you. To say it was humbling, it was, to speak to them and get the questions.

That's on my district. I will lean a little bit towards the department and in talking about the roads plan. Yes, we announced \$225 million. It's a significant investment in our roads and I believe that consistency is also important. I've heard that from the industry and I've heard it from the Heavy Civil that early tenders, which we're doing, tenders are on the streets right now as we speak and more is going to happen. We've made a commitment to work with them to ensure that happens because their members have to do the work. We invest, but their members do the work. We have a short season because of many factors, but last year was a good year and we look forward to a good year this year, as well.

I thank the staff, I'm getting ahead of myself a little bit, but I thank the staff because there are a lot of hours and time spent by staff in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure in coming up with a roads plan. We get input from the regions. We get input from the public, but the staff play a very important part in that. I thank each and every one of them for their time, because it does take them away from their families, because we do work after hours, many of times, and I thank them for that. As I said, it requires a lot of time.

I want to reference one of the Members, I think across the way, in terms of planning for roads and what roads we will do, talk about low-volume roads. We are considering low-volume roads. It is not just about how many travels on that road but who travels on road. It can be a road that might lead to a tourism area. It may be a fish plant area or whatever. So that's used under the lens and we've emphasized more on that because we appreciate it, especially the Members that represent rural parts of the province. They're low travelled roads but there are lots of crab or lots of lobster and that is very lucrative coming up over those roads.

We have a responsibility to look at those roads. Those roads are in regions of the province and if we expect those regions to be successful, then the road infrastructure is very important. I look forward to more investment in roads. There will be other announcements coming in the weeks to come. I believe they'll be good announcements.

Not just roads, I think we lose sight of the bridges and culverts that are an important part of the road infrastructure as well, very important because I always say what lies beneath is as important or more important than what is on top of the infrastructure. The supervisor in my depot in Pool's Cove said to me last week, the first year you got elected we pumped about \$2 million in culverts that was badly needed because it was going to happen within the year that there would be washouts and stuff. Their proactiveness and the insight from the department as well helped to eliminate that. So that's called good planning and I work with all parts of the province for that.

In terms of supporting mining industries, I don't think we talk enough about mining in this province because it brings a lot of dividends. I worked with a Member to pave La Scie roads on the Bay Verte Peninsula. I thank him for his hard work. But, again, we have also got compliments and pats on the

backs from the companies that see the investment because if they see the investment, they will invest. That's part of the planning and it's important to the planning.

I know my time is running out but I have a lot more to say and hopefully at some other point I will get to talk about it.

Good news stories: we talk about Labrador, the Big Land. I was there when we paved the last kilometre of the Trans-Labrador Highway with my colleague. I walked the last kilometre with the company and to talk about what investment was made there. But recognizing though, the investment, what it does for Labrador. I know the Member is looking at me. No, we're not done yet. The pre-feasibility study is happening. We recognize that and look forward to what that study will bring back to us in terms of options for Labrador.

We have a big blueprint in terms of this province, but we live in one of the best provinces in Canada. I say it wherever I go. We have a lot to be thankful and proud about, even though we have our challenges in many sectors like health care, but we'll get there in due time.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

I'll start off related to health care and I'll ask this question: What is the effect on a person's physical and mental health of inadequate income, of precariousness of job security, of not having enough heating oil or money to pay for heat in your house, of homelessness, forced to rely on shelters, of not being able to afford a decent place in which to live, of food insecurity or health

insecurity, not being able to afford the prescribed drugs for a person's health?

If I may, Chair, a quote from a publication on how a guaranteed annual income could put food banks out of business by Herbert Emery, Valerie Fleisch and Lynn McIntyre. Interesting what it starts out with: "A remarkable policy achievement of Canadian governments has been the dramatic reduction in poverty rates of Canadians 65 and older through the creation of an income floor, or guaranteed annual income (GAI), delivered through Canada's public pension system."

In it, they quote Conservative Senator Hugh Segal: "As Segal has pointed out, despite governments spending billions of dollars on the downstream effects of poverty ... not addressing the root causes of poverty or insufficient income has resulted in the inevitable persistence of poverty for Canadians under the age of 65."

It's interesting, too, in this article and in others how many times it references how Newfoundland and Labrador actually had a poverty reduction strategy that worked.

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

**J. DINN:** I'll give credit where credit is due.

I will say this, but since that time it has dwindled, and they note that as well, a number of the articles.

I bring this up now because in the Health Accord, while we're talking about health and we're talking about having emergency room doctors and so on and so forth, the Health Accord in Newfoundland and Labrador speaks to the fact that really the medical system is about 20 per cent, if I read it correctly, understood it correctly, of a person's overall health. Genetics, family and so on and so forth play a part, but 60 per cent of it has to do with the social determinants of health. About the ability to afford having adequate income, of having

job security, of being able to heat one's home, of having a home in which that person can live, of not having to worry about housing insecurity or food insecurity, of making sure that they can afford the prescriptions and the health care that they need.

I've quoted it before but there was a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study done in British Columbia in 2011 that stated that by raising the income of the bottom quintile to the next level would save the health care system in the order of 6.7 per cent. In Newfoundland and Labrador, if I understood math a few years, that we did it correctly, it's about \$200 million a year or more.

In the end, I think in talking about the fact that, yes, we need our doctors here, we can't lose sight of the fact that overall if we want to fix the system, we've got to address the underlying cause of why people are ill. It's not by chance that health statistics showed that there's a correlation – if not cause of but correlation – between the level of education, the level of income and the level of satisfaction: all these things contribute to it. I can't help but believe that if we help people be more secure or more stabilized, that it's going to have an effect and we're going to see a positive effect in the health care system, as to the number of people who need to show up in an emergency ward or who need hospitalization or who can have chronic diseases and prevent it.

I have to say this, I'll say this again when we debate the budget, but when we talk about roads, talk about anything, it's about a quality of life. I can't speak for everyone here, but I would assume that the vast majority our quality of life is reasonable and we've probably have good family supports around us. We probably don't worry about all the time whether we can afford the food that we purchase. We may grumble about it; nevertheless, a lot of people that I know, that's the situation. But to the person whose

income is such, whether it's on income support, minimum wage or whatever, if their income is at a certain stage where their income is so low that a greater percentage of it is already being used to purchase the necessities such as food, they have little room to manoeuvre, Chair. So the fiscal shocks that come their way are going to create that stress in their lives. It's going to have that impact on their mental health, on their family life, on their physical health.

I've talked to a number of the community groups and I can think of one, the Boys and Girls Club, one of the program's they instituted was the Warm Bellies program because they realize that a number of the children who came there weren't going home. There was no supper to go home to at suppertime. So they started a program to make sure that these families, these children had something to eat.

People should not have to rely on charity as a solution. They should not have to rely on food banks as a solution. They are there for those disasters, when you run into those difficult moments. But when people depend on them regularly, month after month, year after year, there is a problem that we need to address. I can tell you, it then comes down to it's going to have an effect on their health and well-being. You're going to see the effect in cost on our health care system.

I'm not going to take up the full amount of time, but one message you've heard me speak in this House, and I'll continue to say this, if we're going to fix the health care system in the long term, and Sister Elizabeth Davis has said it and the Health Accord has said it, it's going to cost money upfront. I think in the long term, we can't lose sight that while we're talking about the human resources piece, infrastructure, whatever we want, who gets what hospital, I think at some point we've got to keep in mind the long-term vision.

Our objective is not only to build a better medical system, but to build a more

supportive society so that people will not need to rely on that medical system as much as they may do now. I'll leave it at that and I'll talk more about it when the budget debate is in front of us.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** With the permission of the Member for CBS, I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion is carried.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of Committee.

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

The Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have asked me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and

directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**J. HOGAN:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee sit again?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

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

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 10 tomorrow morning.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.