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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Before we begin, I'd like to welcome to the public gallery students from Heritage Collegiate.

Welcome this morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Government Business

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, April 26, 2023, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this

House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 27, 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: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to the students from Heritage Collegiate. Not my district, but right along side. Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, we're debating the budget today and obviously there's lots of concern from both sides about the budget and I hear the other side talk about what we're not voting for.

We always talk about what we do as a government and how we move things forward. The reality of it is there are lots of good things that happen. This government does some things right, there's no question. But it's the repercussions of what happens from when things are done wrong.

One of the examples of that is we hear very boastfully about \$10 daycare and it's great. There are loads of people out there who cannot afford to put their children in daycare. Zero question about it. The problem is the repercussions that have

come as a result of \$10 daycare being implemented with no plan.

Just the other night I had a conversation with a daycare provider who owns not one daycare, not two, not three, not four, but a multitude of daycares. They had major concerns with \$10 daycare and what it has done to her business, what it has done to the children inside of that business, specifically children with disabilities.

I guess my issue with the budget comes back to the same thing with the \$10 daycare. We can implement all kinds of things; we can do all kinds of things that are really good. But it's the little things that we don't plan for. We all know when you throw a rock in the water it creates ripples. Well, those ripples have an effect on a lot of different things. It's a lot of what this budget is doing.

My colleague for Harbour Main said yesterday something very similar. We don't look at the big picture. The big picture is what we need to look at. All things in this province are not equal. So while \$10 daycare in St. John's offers great opportunity to a lot of people, it's caused issues certainly with autistic children and other children with special needs, it's had that effect in rural Newfoundland, too. But in rural Newfoundland a lot of daycare providers, they don't have the facilities or the ability to come under this type of daycare structure and it needs to be looked at.

The reality of it is this is not going to work everywhere the same way, much like everything we do. We look at this province as a whole and we have a solution where we think one size fits all. But one size doesn't fit all in this province. We have a big divide between urban and rural Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, the budget certainly offers some things, but I'll also say something that we've heard from everyone here: seniors. I

find it hard to believe that whether you're a government Member in St. John's or the Northern Peninsula or you're an Opposition Member in Terra Nova or Bonavista that people aren't hearing from seniors.

Seniors in this province, along with a lot of other people that I would say are making decent money, are struggling. When you go out and you talk to a senior or you're in a grocery store and you watch a senior pick up fruit or vegetables, they look at the price and they put it back down. Or they go to the checkout and at the checkout when the grocery clerk says this costs \$9, they look at it and they say \$9, I only paid four something for this two weeks ago. That's the reality. Things have doubled quickly, some of these things.

Some of that is driven by season, obviously. Vegetables and fruits grow and they're shipped in from different places and there are different costs associated with it, but there's nobody in this room who can debate that the cost of living has grown exponentially. Who has that affected the most?

Well, obviously, it's the lower income people. We talk about the supplement that's been given to seniors and all the money, the \$500 million, it all sounds great, but it's not money that's going directly into their pockets all the time. Some of it does, but it's a band-aid solution. The \$500 one-time cheque is a band-aid solution. Five hundred dollars gets you groceries for two or three weeks. It gets you a portion of a tank of oil. It gets you, maybe, insurance on your house. It gets you a lot of little things but only once. Once in a 12-month cycle and seniors need more support.

When you talk about 19 cents a day, 19 cents a day – that's what it equals. If anyone can look at me or if you can look yourself in the mirror and say, that's great; that's good for the seniors. I don't believe it not for a second. Nineteen cents gets you nothing. Nineteen cents is an insult.

Nineteen cents is – especially in these times when we're going to be implementing a new carbon tax.

This government says it's not their tax, it's a federal tax, but last May they were all in on it. Last May, they supported it. Last May, every single Member on that side of the House, every single one voted for the carbon tax. Every single one of them supported it. Every single one supported the carbon tax, but now it's not their idea. It's not their tax.

While they boasted and bragged about a made-right-here-in-Newfoundland solution for carbon tax. It's not a made-right-here solution. As a matter of fact, when it cuts in, I would argue that we're going to have seniors and low-income families in this province most likely have to move out of their houses. Then we talk about the solution for some of this, when we talk about the solution for carbon we say well, we're going to put heat pumps in your house. I don't know if anyone here has gone out and tried to go through that process, but we deal with people on a daily basis who have tried to go through that process.

So the first thing they think is that the process is going to allow them to instantly put a heat pump in their house. It's simply not true. The first thing they have to do is bring an electrical contractor to see if they can get it. If you're in rural Newfoundland, there's a very high probability you don't have a 200-amp service and, if you do, you probably are utilizing every bit of your breakers and you don't have enough room to put one in. That's the first thing.

The second thing is a lot of the people only have 100-amp service. If you have 100-amp service, you simply can't get a heat pump. So now you're looking at a \$15,000 to \$20,000 bill just to upgrade your electrical service. So the solution to the \$15,000 or \$20,000 bill, prior to buying a \$7,000 heat pump, is a \$5,000 government grant.

I'm not a mathematician, but I'll use the lower number, \$15,000. Fifteen plus seven is 22; \$22,000. You go spend \$22,000 and we'll give you \$5,000 to put a heat pump in. Now, you're saying this to people who can't afford to put gas in their car, who can't afford to put insurance on their vehicle, who can't afford to go to the grocery store, who already can't afford to heat their house. The suggestion is that they need to come up with all of this money upfront in order to get \$5,000 back. So a 25 per cent rebate, if you're in that kind of a situation in rural Newfoundland. This is why I constantly say all things aren't equal. These grants are great, but the divide between rural and urban Newfoundland is massive.

We all know – we've got houses in this province. It's like the no tax on home insurance. It sounds great. It really sounds great. I made a comment here how it helps out the rich. Do you know what? When you think about it, you go to rural Newfoundland and you look at communities that don't have firefighting services, don't have fire hydrants, they don't live close enough to a firefighting service and they just can't get insurance. They're not allowed to get insurance. So they're getting a tax break on something that they can't even buy.

If you're living in rural Newfoundland, rural Newfoundland is different. If you look at the busing solution that we gave to low-income people here, all you've got to do is listen to the radio this morning to see how well that's working. The GoBus is leaving people with disabilities behind; people who have to go to medical appointments are being left behind. What caused that? I wonder is it another ripple by an ill-thought service? Maybe, just maybe.

But you think about what happens to someone in rural Newfoundland. I don't know the last time any of the government Members went out around the bay. If they're not from out there and they had a look at the metro service that's out there or the train service, or subway service or any of the

other transportation services that are there for rural Newfoundland, I can tell you, we can't even get planes into Newfoundland. Think about that. We can't get flights in and out of Newfoundland and we're saying that rural Newfoundland has the ability to utilize that kind of stuff. They just simply don't. It isn't there. So now we're giving a service to urban and we're forgetting rural.

Well, I'll tell you, I've got people on disability that would love to get the value of that GoBus ticket for a month; \$72 would make a big change for some of those people – a big change. When they've got to go to one appointment, \$72, if you think about it – so now we have agreed as a government that we're going to subsidize a portion of the province and forget about the rest. Well, I'll tell you, the people that live in rural Newfoundland could certainly use that money. They could certainly use that ability and they don't have the ability to get on these buses and utilize this service. This is just another example of a decision that's made that doesn't look at the big picture, and those decisions are the reason I can't support this budget.

I'm supporting what's not in the budget. It's not about what's in the budget; it's about what's left out of the budget. I don't think anyone here can argue that. The things that are left out of this budget are massive. Some of the things in the budget create bigger problems than they solve, and why? Well, I think we could argue quite simply a big part of that is because there's no plan.

Doctors, there's no plan – sorry, I get it. Doctors, nurses, hospitals – we can go anywhere in the province right now, anywhere, and we can find ERs that have been closed. What we've said here lots, it's a huge issue for the province and the reality of it is we are closing ER doors when there are qualified people behind those doors who could triage patients. I'll go back to the gentleman in Bonavista. We had a man in Bonavista who passed away. I pass along my condolences to the family. I would stand

on my feet here today and say it's absolutely unacceptable and I would say it's a failure of government. There is no question about it.

When you think about ERs and the ability to triage, all you have to do is look at an accident on the highway, you look at a firefighter responding to something, you look at a first-aider, you look at an ambulance attendant, the very first thing they do is triage. If the hospital ER doors were open and we had people in behind them who could triage patients, they could quite simply either send them home and tell them to wait it out. They could tell them we need to get an ambulance for you and send you to the next closest hospital. But for someone to go knock on the door of a hospital while there are nurses and doctors in behind and be told to go home and call an ambulance on their own steam, it is absolutely a failure of government and there are ways that we can address it. And guess what? We haven't addressed it, and we haven't addressed it out of fear, I guess. Fear of liability, perhaps.

But the reality of the whole situation is that instead of making small steps to fix little things that affect rural Newfoundland, we decide we'll just close that off for a little while. They can leave Bonavista and drive to Clarendville; it's an hour and a half. They don't understand what it does to the ER in Clarendville. They don't understand what happens if you close down an ER in Central Newfoundland, what happens to the emergency rooms in Gander or Grand Falls. It's pretty simple what happens; they fill up beyond capacity. They put patients in the halls. Those patients lie on gurneys for 10, 15, sometimes up to two weeks, 10, 15 days. Think about that.

I've had people in the hall of a hospital for two weeks. We've had people die on gurneys in ER hallways. Think about that. I don't know how we're okay with it. You know, we can blame that on a shortage of doctors, shortage of nurses, overworked, all

kinds of different things. But the reality of it is the former Health minister was the former president of the NLMA. He talked about this 10 years ago. This problem didn't happen overnight. In 2015, when this government was elected, they knew this problem existed. They had eight years to address it and now, all of a sudden, it's a priority.

We've got a Premier who said he ran on this. Well, he shouldn't have ran on it because, for the six years prior, this government ran away from it, when they should have been running towards it. Everybody knows that our previous Health minister knew the problems. He knew the problems; he spoke about them openly as the president of the NLMA, lots of times.

You can go back. Don't believe me; don't take my word for it. Go back and read the quotes. The quotes are all out there; he talked about it extensively. But from 2015 onward, under this Liberal government's watch, it was ignored. So, now, COVID comes along. What do we do? We've got another excuse here, folks. We're going to blame it on COVID. These results or these issues were long before COVID came.

Carbon tax: We talk about the introduction of this new carbon tax and how it's going to help things and we all know that we need a greener tomorrow. There's zero question. Zero question that we need to have a just transition from carbons to green fuels – zero question. But we also need to know the repercussions and we need a government that's open, honest and transparent and talks about what it's going to look like. So I'll give you an example: electric vehicles for everyone. Well, if we all got electric vehicles tomorrow, guess what? We wouldn't be able to charge them. We wouldn't be able to go where we got to go. We understand that and charging stations are coming in. It's being done, slowly.

But the one thing that concerns me the most about this is what the actual cost is going to be, because nobody has ever discussed

that. Nobody has ever discussed what the real cost of electrification of vehicles is going to be. I say that from a municipal standpoint. If you think about how municipalities in this province sustain and work, they operate under multi-year capital works programs and a lot of that money comes directly from gas tax money.

So what happens as gas tax money goes down? It's a great question; nobody can answer it. But gas tax money will slowly decrease as we electrify our vehicles. So what do municipalities do then? Do they make do with less or do we charge more for electric charging or electric vehicles? It's going to be one or the other. I can tell you right now, there are lots of people in this room who've been on municipalities as mayors or as councillors; they know how much a municipality struggles to make ends meet from year to year.

So what happens? I'll tell you what happens. Electric cars will come in no different than natural gas in Ontario. When the big boom came, it came in cheap, it was a big thing and they had to increase the price. So people will end up with electric vehicles, paying as much or more for fuel to charge them, or they'll pay an astronomical tax on the purchase of a vehicle in order to subsidize the gas tax. These municipalities cannot exist without the gas tax. If you think about this province, you think about over 180 municipalities and LSDs on boil water orders. Again, I see nowhere in this budget where it addresses that.

How can you make the biggest impact on this province? You want to give people healthy choices. I hear this government talk about healthy choices all the time, so we're going to put a tax on sugary drinks, but we're not going to help people get clean water to drink.

As a matter of fact, if you have to go buy bottled water, you're going to tax that also. Imagine, paying taxes on bottled water. Tell me how that makes sense, when you go out

to rural Newfoundland and people don't have access – they have zero access, 180-something communities have no access to potable water and if they want it, they have to go to the grocery store and buy it and they have to pay tax on it. That is not a healthy choice. Absolutely unbelievable that we would tax water.

At the end of the day, we had lots of opportunity, if you talk about sugar tax and what it does and what it's supposed to achieve. It isn't working, it's proven; it's not going to work, it's proven. Yet we continue to do it. We have different options. That is the problem. Again, the ripple effect.

Now, there are people over there that are rumbling and mumbling that there's no such thing as tax on water. I would say go to the store and buy a bottle of water and come back with your bill and tell me that you don't pay tax on water. Unbelievable that I could hear a Minister of the Crown say there's no tax on water. There is tax on water. Absolutely, 100 per cent, there is tax on water.

Not only is there tax but you pay a bottle tax, too, on top of that. So you pay for the bottle and you get taxed. HST on water, absolutely.

Now go talk to a senior that lives out in Charlottetown who has no water because they're locked in by a national park. There have been meetings requested with ministers here for three years and we haven't gotten the meetings – three years. Guess what? They pay tax on water. They pay tax on water, every ounce of water they drink. Every time they go to the grocery store, they pay tax on water. Not cool.

AN HON. MEMBER: And tax on fuel to get to the grocery store.

L. PARROTT: Yes.

Not only do they pay tax on their water but they pay tax on their gasoline so they can get to the grocery store.

MTAP, I have to give a shout-out to the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. Last week, we had an issue with a patient on MTAP. We have issues, I would argue, on a daily basis with MTAP. Last week, after the announcement that MTAP was being changed and it was going under a different portfolio, when we made a call, we got a resolution almost instantly. I was shocked, surprised and delighted.

Now I will also say MTAP has a long way to go. Nowhere in this province should you have to pay more for health care because you live in rural Newfoundland. Again, a great example of how we miss the divide between rural and urban. This budget does that very clearly. We need to understand that if you live outside of the metro area, if you live outside of Corner Brook, Gander, Clarenville, the larger centres, it costs you more to be sick. We need to find a way to solve that.

Now MTAP is a great step towards it, but I'm telling you if you live in rural Newfoundland and you have to go to an appointment and you don't have money in your pocket, a lot of times people can't go. The reality of it is there are lots of people in this province who cannot afford to fill their gas tanks up to go to a medical appointment and under no situation should that be acceptable – under no situation.

Now, add on top of that the people who live in Bonavista, as an example, who have to drive to Clarenville to go to an emergency room. They don't even qualify for MTAP. It's just not there. If you don't have a preapproved appointment, you can't get MTAP. So what do we do for those people? Well, I tell you what, some of them sit home. Some of them can't afford to go. Some of them sit home and they're sick and they got no way out. Others go, but what do they sacrifice? What do they do without? I'll tell

you what they do without: heat, food and other essentials of life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I'm going to, I guess, try to stick to the actual subamendment that was put in there. Without reading it, the gist of the subamendment, as I would read it, is that we as a province are letting the federal government off the hook. I think that's sort of the gist of it, when it comes to transfers, as it relates to health and other transfers from Ottawa, the feds are getting off the hook.

I hear a lot of Members, certainly over on this side, because I haven't heard a sound from the other side, a little bit of heckling every now and then but nobody wants to speak to the budget, but I've heard a lot of my colleagues over on this side of the House concentrate very heavily on seniors. I think that's because, quite frankly, we hear a lot from seniors.

I know I hear a lot from seniors and, let's face it, seniors are near and dear to our hearts because we're talking about our moms, our dads, our grandmothers, our grandfathers. That's who we're talking about. Seniors is not this fictitious entity that is out there. They're our family, our friends and they're near and dear to all of our hearts. Very important that we do all we can to support them in their – quote, unquote – golden years.

Now, just like every other group in society, every subset of the population if you will, you cannot simply bunch all seniors into one group. It is not a one size fits all; you cannot take a cookie-cutter approach. We know there are seniors citizens in this province

that are doing quite well. We have senior citizens who are millionaires, multi-millionaires. We have seniors that have been very successful in business or other private life.

We have seniors who, they may not be rich, but they're doing quite well. Seniors who were fortunate enough in their working life to have the ability to put away money for retirement. Seniors who worked, perhaps whether it be for a private company or in public service, who have a pension that they can rely on. Certainly we know when all these Members here in this House of Assembly – although I would say for a lot of the newer Members it has certainly been watered down, no doubt about that, but certainly for a lot of Members in the House when we retire, we'll have a decent pension. We'll have a decent pension to be able to rely on.

So you cannot compare that situation to many seniors who we have in our province who are simply on that fixed income of OAS and CPP. That's the only income a lot of seniors in this province have: OAS, CPP and maybe supplement. We all know what that amounts to, somewhere in the range of \$17,000 or \$18,000 a year, whatever it is, less than \$20,000 a year.

I look at the pandemic and the CERB money that came out to everybody, almost every chick and child – so the expression goes – got \$2,000 a month. Some people probably got it and they shouldn't have gotten it and a lot of people are having to pay it back, but the bottom line is that anybody who qualified would have been entitled to \$2,000 a month, including seniors and so on, if they were working of course.

So, to my mind, when the federal government came out with that amount, they kind of established that somebody would have had to sit down and say how much – because we were in a pandemic and it was an emergency situation, but the

federal government certainly could not afford to give everybody a lavish lifestyle.

So it came down to, I would assume, what is the core basic amount to give somebody during this pandemic, because they cannot work, in order for them to be able to survive to pay the bills and so on. That amount was \$2,000 a month. That's what the federal government chose. I didn't choose it. Nobody in this House of Assembly chose it but somebody up in Ottawa, in their wisdom, decided \$2,000 a month is the base. That's the benchmark that we have to give everybody in order for them to survive.

I would suggest that seeing as how they came up with this benchmark, then why is it okay for a senior on OAS and CPP, how are they expected to live? Now that the pandemic is over, why is it that they can live on less than \$2,000 a month? Substantially less than \$2,000 a month. How do you square that circle? When you hear Members in this House of Assembly talking about the needs of seniors, those needs are very real. When we hear stories – we've all heard them – of seniors who cannot afford their medication, seniors who are taking a pill, as an example, and cutting it in half and taking half of what they're supposed to do – instead of taking a pill every day, they're taking a half a pill a day because they cannot afford their medication.

We hear of seniors who can't afford to eat. They can't afford to eat properly. Seniors going to food banks. Go over to St. Vincent de Paul. This is nothing; we all know this. In everybody's district, we all have food banks and so on. I'm assuming that every Member have their finger on the pulse of what's going on in their district and they would have visited their local food banks, they know who's running them and they're getting the information first-hand. I know I am. I know my colleague from Mount Pearl North, we're very involved in the food banks and food programs in Mount Pearl. I'm sure every other Member is as well.

So I know that this is nothing new. Everybody knows there are a lot of seniors that are struggling that are going to food banks and seniors that are not getting their medications. You know, you talk about the social determinants of health and you look at the need for seniors to be able to get out. There are seniors who literally can't afford to go out, say, if there was a seniors program, they can't afford – they try to keep it as cheap as possible, like \$5 for a game of cards for the afternoon, very inexpensive, but there are seniors who just can't afford that \$5 or they can't afford the \$5 plus a taxi to get from their house to the seniors' centre and back. Now \$5 is probably \$25 or \$30 when you factor in the taxi.

That's their only little bit of socialization. We know that a lot of seniors when they get up at a certain age the reality of it is, in many cases, one of the spouses passes away. Usually it's the man – not always, but that's normally the way, statistically. If you were to go to a seniors' group, you'd see it's predominantly female. There are some males there, but that's just the reality.

A lot cases, that's their only bit of socialization if there's a program or so on where they can go and meet with other seniors, have a cup of tea, have a game of cards or whatever. But there are a lot of them who cannot afford to even do that.

We all know this is real. Now, the question is, what do we do about it? How do we assist those seniors to make life more affordable? I know we have a seniors' supplement and we did have a 5 per cent increase. Now we can argue it wasn't enough. I think my colleague for Terra Nova said 17 cents a day or 19 cents a day or whatever the amount was that he said. It's not a lot of money. But I want to come back and circle back to this subamendment which talks about the federal government.

While we're sitting in this House of Assembly arguing with each other about you're not doing enough for seniors and

we're doing lots for seniors; if you don't vote for this budget, that means you're voting against the supplement. Oh, I'm not voting against it; I am voting against this budget because you're not doing enough for seniors. You should do this and you should do that and you should do something else.

Listen, anything we can do for seniors I'm there and I know every Member is. But the reality of it is that when it comes to the cost of living and seniors' ability to live, that's what the federal government is there for. That's why we have OAS and CPP. Just think about it. We're putting, I'm going to say, \$2,000 a year. It might be a little less, a little more, but somewhere in that range into the seniors' supplement. I think it's around \$2,000 a year. That \$2,000 a year that we're taking of our provincial tax dollars to give to seniors – and I'm not against helping them. Don't get me wrong; I'm not. But that \$2,000 should be added to the OAS. That's the federal government who should be paying for that.

We're taking money away from health care and we're taking money away from education and roads and everything else to try to help seniors. Now the pressure is on to try to help them more because of the cost of living and the federal government are getting off scot-free.

That's where the argument is to. That's where we should collectively – in my opinion, collectively, we need to be going and the Premier needs to be meeting with the other premiers and so on. I'm sure this is not a Newfoundland problem. It's the same amount right across the board. The federal government is not providing enough income to seniors to be able to live, to survive, and certainly not to live comfortably. I would argue not to survive.

Certainly the lower income ones, the seniors who all they have is OAS and CPP, the federal government, as I said, determined we needed \$2,000 per month on the CERB payments to survive, but a

senior right now on OAS and CPP are expected to live on far less than that. We're arguing with each other over how we make up the difference through our provincial dollars that are scarce, and instead of bringing the fight to Ottawa to say you need to do more for seniors, you need to increase the OAS and/or the CPP and/or the supplement to bring seniors, the basic seniors, to bring them up to a level that they can live a dignified life and that they can afford to eat, heat their homes and get their medications.

Now, are there things that we can still be doing? We have programs for home repairs and all that. That's all good. We have programs for our seniors to make their home more accessible. I definitely support that. There are other medical programs and different things we have to support seniors, drug cards and so on. We're doing all that and I support it and I know every Member supports it.

But when it comes to the basic income for a senior to be able to live – and again, I'm not talking about every senior. I'm not talking about some senior who's a millionaire who's got a condo down in Florida and a big boat in their garden and quads and cabins and all that. I'm not talking about them. But the senior who is only entitled, the only income they get is their bit of OAS and CPP, surely goodness, there has to be a way that the federal government can separate that group from the group who have other income and say every senior needs at least \$2,000 a month, the same as everyone needed in COVID, and to change the rates on OAS and/or CPP to reflect that. I think, collectively, all Members of this House of Assembly, we need to be lobbying Ottawa. We have seven MPs; we need to be talking to them about bringing that to Parliament.

The Premier needs to be talking to the other premiers. The Premier talks about his great relationship with Ottawa, with the prime minister. I can remember the former Premier Ball was talking about his Sunday

morning chats with Judy Foote when she was minister; I can remember that. Every Sunday morning, we have our Sunday morning chats and we have an in with Ottawa. We've got such a great relationship with Ottawa it's time to start leveraging it. This is one area that we can leverage it.

It's not just this issue. I stuck to this one because seniors are so important to us all, but there are other areas, in my opinion, where the federal government are totalling getting off the hook. We look at what happened with the Atlantic Accord; I'll just use that as an example. Former Premier Williams, at the time, we all remember on the news, we got it, the \$2-billion cheque in the airport and so on.

Part of that negotiation, as I recall, which was with Paul Martin, I think at the time, was that there was going to be a period of time – I don't remember whether it was five years or 10 years. It was seven years where we'd be able to collect our oil royalties and it would not impact equalization, because there was a recognition of the uniqueness of our province, of our huge debt, of our huge infrastructure deficit. We have a huge – we all know that. Despite the \$1.4 billion or \$1.6 billion announced in this budget – which is a good thing; I'm not knocking it – that's not even going to put a dent in the overall picture. We could spend 10 times that. That's how bad our infrastructure is.

But there was a seven-year moratorium and unfortunately, I believe – I'm not trying to rewrite history now; I'm trying to remember it. But I believe it was Harper who came in and quashed that. After a short period of time, he quashed it. I think it might have been one of the casualties of the ABC campaign, and there was no doubt there was casualties associated to the ABC campaign.

As good as we felt about it at the time, to give Ottawa the bird, so to speak, we all felt good about it at the time, but we paid a price for it. We paid a price for it and that

was one of the prices we paid was, I think, when Harper quashed that. That would have gave us an opportunity to, sort of, catch up but the reality of it is that nobody ever did go back and recognize that. And even when we look at the more recent equalization discussion, a couple of years ago, with the Trudeau government, they did nothing to fix it either. Status quo, you're getting no equalization.

When you look at the revenues coming into Quebec – I hate to keep using them as the bogeyman, but it is what it is – the revenues coming in and their billions of dollars and they've got tons of money coming in and they're still getting equalization –

AN HON. MEMBER: And a break on the carbon tax.

P. LANE: And the break on the carbon tax, my colleague says, and everything else. Yet, we're still here with huge infrastructure deficits, a \$14.7-billion provincial net debt. We got to be careful, too. That's the net debt. That's not including all of the unfunded liability, I don't think. I think our actual debt is a lot higher than that. It's unacceptable.

We look at the health care and all the needs we have in health care. Yes, we've got extra money for health care. So did every other province but, again, I'm only going by memory. I think it was like 20 per cent of what was asked for. Like in terms of the amount that all the provinces asked that we need X amount of extra money for health care, I think we only got like 20 per cent, thereabouts, of that.

So Ottawa fell way short, not just to Newfoundland, but to all provinces when it came to that. Of course, you know, I can go on about Ottawa. I can go on about the carbon tax and the impact that that's going to have on people. They say some people are going to be better off. I'll believe that when I see it. I think that there's going to be people who are going to be worse off. A lot of people are going to be worse off.

Interestingly, I do note the fact that the government says they do not support it. It's a federal tax. But as my colleague from Terra Nova said, the last two or three years they had no problem supporting it when the money was coming into the Newfoundland coffers and they were keeping it. Now that it's going to Ottawa, now we have a problem with it.

Of course, the other one that comes to mind when we're talking Ottawa here is the fishery and the management or should I say the mismanagement of our fisheries over the years and the need for some joint management. The fact that there are things that we see going on as it relates to some of these quotas and fishermen having to go out in unsafe vessels and so on, which is absolutely ridiculous, and Ottawa has let us down there as well.

I guess the reason I am focusing on Ottawa is because this subamendment speaks to the role that the federal government has in our fiscal well-being. There are a number of areas, which I have outlined here, that have definitely had a negative impact on Newfoundland and Labrador. I think we would be so much better off, in many regards, if that was something that we could all agree on, to get together all parties, all Members, to lobby Ottawa to right some of the wrongs as it relates to our province, to some of the money coming into our province, and certainly to benefit our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I will finish off by welcoming the students from Heritage Collegiate. You have a wonderful Member there representing you and I hope you enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to talk a little bit on the amendment here. I don't think I actually spoke on the budget yet. It is really hard to actually talk on budget or talk on this amendment when, in actual fact, after being in the House for what – we've been here now for three years, is it?

AN HON. MEMBER: Four.

L. EVANS: We're in four years now and I have to say that it is disheartening and I am not saying anything that I haven't said before.

Yesterday I was listening to my fellow colleague for Harbour Main. She talked about seniors and they can't afford to eat healthy and she listed off a lot of statistics to support what she was saying and you could tell by the passion in her voice that it was very concerning to her. I have a lot of respect for Members of the House that come forward and try to raise issues for people who don't have a voice, that don't have influence. Because the problem with politics is who can buy the influence, either financially or with positioning. People who are considered rock stars got a lot of influence and people who are considered influential business people.

But, at the end of the day, listening to the Member for Harbour Main talk about seniors who can't afford to eat healthy, you know, it is so concerning for me. The reason why it is concerning for me – it is actually really emotional – I have a document here about suicides in Newfoundland and Labrador. So the people we advocate for – our leader actually had a lady here in the House yesterday and she was there. I recognized her because I heard her speak. I heard her speak about the excruciating pain from lack of dental care. I heard people speak about not being able to actually have a night's rest because of pain from the dental care.

Now, we who work in certain industries and in certain positions, a lot of times we're blessed with good health insurance. But

later in life a lot of our elders and our seniors don't have access to medical insurance. What happens is people who don't have coverage fall through the cracks.

What's that got to do with suicides? *Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada: a time trend analysis* – this is a document talking about suicides. Why is that concerning for me? Why am I always upset when I'm speaking in the House of Assembly? Why am I always trying to downplay my anger in the House of Assembly?

I'll just read from this study; it's actually published. "A 2016 study found that the suicide rate in Labrador was four times higher than the rate in Newfoundland, the island portion of the province." That's for Labrador, four times higher. We always deal with statistics.

Why would suicides in Labrador be higher? And I know a lot of people, because it doesn't impact them, they don't really care. But for me, I have to care because it's my district; my district is in Labrador.

I want to read again, Speaker, and it is relevant, so I am going to read, but it's relevant to my speech here on the budget and on the amendment: "Prior research found that suicides rates were higher in Labrador than in Newfoundland" – the Island portion – "and up to twenty times higher in Inuit and Innu First Nation communities"

Suicides in Inuit and Innu communities are 20 times higher. In my district, I have Natuashish, which is Innu, an Innu community, and I have five Inuit communities. They actually negotiated a land claims agreement. Twenty times higher.

Now, you hear me talk on that petition for fair electricity rates and when I'm talking about that petition I talk about manpower to haul wood to heat your house, about elders

not being able to actually haul wood anymore to heat their house, so they go cold because the price of stove oil is too expensive. They can't actually afford to buy oil, let alone have money left over for the day-to-day living such as food, when they have to pay for the high price of stove oil. The price of gasoline, Speaker, is so expensive that a lot of times people actually can't even afford the gasoline to go. Twenty times higher in Labrador. Twenty times higher in Northern Labrador.

Now, what's really, really upsetting and the reason why I read that petition and I talk about the manpower to haul wood, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro don't want us to use electricity, that's why it's priced out of range, 19 cents a kilowatt hour. Who can afford that?

Suicides: that's supposed to be a sombre, serious topic. Now, I'm reading: "The disparity was largest for females in Nunatsiavut ..." – that's my district. So those females are my family, my relatives, my friends, children of my friends.

"The disparity was largest for females in Nunatsiavut, the Inuit region in northern Labrador, who has an age-standardized suicide mortality rate that was 31.5 times ... higher than the rate among females in Newfoundland ..." – 31.5.

Now, why would women in my district be killing themselves 31.5 times more than on the Island? I came into this House with the expectation that if people understood the inequities we face, the social marginalization we face, something would be done. I'm here four years and nothing has been done.

This is another document, the *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy*. I have to talk about suicide, because if nothing is done people in my district will continue to kill themselves. I don't mind saying that. I don't mind talking about the hard topics. I talk about sexual assault. I talk about addictions.

I talk about suicide. I talk about incarceration. I'm not going to be ashamed to say that the marginalization in my district, the failure for governments since the Joey Smallwood era to actually treat my people fairly, is really, really harmed us. The *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy*, my God.

You want to talk about acronyms. I think it was actually one of the Indigenous days that was honoured here in the House of Assembly, I got up and I talked about all the acronyms we have for Indigenous people that we identify. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, that's an acronym now: MMIWG. In actual fact, I actually resisted the acronym so Truth and Reconciliation.

Let me read you another acronym now, I'll read it out, *National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy*, NISPS, referred to as the strategy. So until governments actually start treating our people fairly and start actually doing some things that reverse the harms done by colonization, such as residential schools, such as actually having our women go missing and murdered and no one ever actually identified or actually thought it was important enough to address it, we're going to continue to be harmed.

Now, just continuing on from a document, it says here that "The four regions of Inuit Nunangat have called for action to address the elevated rates of suicide among Inuit for decades, yet suicide endures as a leading cause of death among our people, especially young people."

So the four regions have basically been calling for something to be done. They've actually taken action themselves and created a National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy. Of course, that's an acronym, too. But now what they're looking at us having is Inuit-led research to provide leadership for Inuit to try and reverse some of these harms that was done by colonization. What they want are policies that support suicide

prevention and focus on the healthy development of children and youth as the basis for a healthy society. That's what we talk about all the time. I hear it in the House of Assembly. Our youth are our future. So that's really important.

"The high rates of suicide ... are a symptom of the social and economic inequities that have existed between Inuit Nunangat and most of other regions of Canada since Inuit began to be impacted by colonization" They go on to talk about prejudice and social inequities families face – prejudice and social inequities.

So sometimes prejudice can be subtle. Sometimes people who actually are prejudice against Inuit and Innu are not even aware because what they do is they see all the things going on, the addictions, the violence, the assaults, the lack of housing, the poor quality of housing and what they do is they just blame our people instead of looking at the harms that were done to them as children growing up.

I know all about the harms that were done to children growing up in my district, but the thing is I only learned of it recently when their lawsuit was there for residential schools. Most of the people don't talk about it; don't talk about the harms done.

"These inequities make it challenging for people to meet their basic needs and place undue stress on the lives of our people. Inequity in this context refers to unfair, avoidable differences in social and economic status due to cultural or other forms of prejudice, and the failure of governments" – such as the one that I'm actually standing, facing today – "to act to address these differences."

So what's the solution? "Creating equity for Inuit means eliminating unfair and avoidable differences in areas such as housing, education, and access to health care in ways that validate our language, culture and identity."

I talk a lot about housing. We had the federal advocate for housing come up to Nunatsiavut, into our largest community of Nain, and go around and look at the housing and she said that it was abominable. In actual fact, she told a reporter that she still has nightmares about it. So imagine now if you went up and you came back and you had nightmares? How bad must the conditions be?

So what's the problem with having such bad housing conditions that the federal advocate for housing has nightmares? What's the problem with that? Because housing is where people live. It's where you raise your children to grow up to be your next generation, to be your adults. And if you don't have a safe, good, warm house to raise your children in, you're repeating the next generation of intergenerational trauma. You really, really are, and we're going to continue to have more reports on suicide.

In my district, 20 times the rate – 31.5 for women in Nunatsiavut compared to women on the Island. Yet, I should be pleased that we're giving token amounts of funding so that our Indigenous women can hold gatherings and go to conferences. At the end of the day, when you want to invest in solutions and equity, you have to address the housing problems; you have to address food insecurity.

Don't get me talking about food insecurity. Food insecurity always raises the issue of the freight boat that was taken off from the Island. Why is that so important to me? It got me elected. Little did I know when I walked into here, what I was walking into. No wonder they took it off and the rationale they said to me: Well, Lela, that was always the agreement. When the Trans-Labrador Highway was nearing completion, we're going to take off that freight boat from the Island. And the cost of the food is then just going to skyrocket. Oh, wait a minute; they didn't say that, but we knew that. Then when they took off that freight boat from the Island, the Nunatsiavut Government actually

accused this government – it is still the same government – of violating their land claims agreement because they failed to consult.

Then when they made the decision, took off the boat, awarded the contract for – what was it – 15 years for to a business person, then they went around to the communities in the spring. It is not consultation if you tell them what you've done. That is not consultation – that is not consultation. Food insecurity is really, really impacting the mental health of people in my region, and that is why we have these reports on suicide and you can't get anymore extreme than suicide.

Do you want to know something? It is not just the youth that are killing themselves; it is not just the adults; we've got seniors committing suicide. The suicide rate for women in my district is 31.5 per cent higher than on the Island. That is why I talk – I don't want to stand up here; I haven't spoken on the budget yet because it actually sickens me to stand up and talk on deaf ears.

We have all the agendas. Everybody has their own agenda but, at the end of the day, I have to try and find a way so that the quality of life for the Innu and the Inuit improves so that we don't have people harmed day to day, every day.

Housing is an issue. Education – don't get me started on education. In 2021, in September, the kids went to school all happy, only to be told that oh, the CDLI courses now, the ones that you're doing so you can actually get the courses you need to go on to post-secondary – because they're not offered in the school; you have to do them online – is going to be on the Newfoundland time zone only. So what happens is – this was in 2021 – they're doing the in class. The teacher says okay, it's time for you to go now. You have to actually get up halfway through your class and leave that and go online. Then when

you come back from being online, you go into your classroom, the other kids have already got a half an hour lecture time done. That is so unfair.

But it was normal. It was considered that was acceptable. That was just collateral damage. The people in my district were collateral damage for the convenience of the people on the Island, the students. Over in Lab West, they didn't actually have the problem because they had the teachers to be able to deliver those courses.

When you look at it, what's the problem with that? Access to post-secondary, being on a level playing field. People in my district, including our youth, including our people that want to go on to become our future leaders, don't have a level playing field. It went on for the whole year. Then, last year in 2022, going in again all happy, new year, new beginning, going into the school year – in Nain, our largest Inuit community, all the students there in high school, their teachers were taken from them. They were there at the beginning of the school year but they were taken and put in junior high, to teach the junior high and the elementary students and they were all forced to go on and do their courses online.

What's the problem with that? I'll tell you what the problem with that is: Our Internet is so slow. So slow that they were getting bumped off. It was really frustrating, people wanting to switch down to the general program and what that is, is it's basically putting up barriers for our people to get adequate access to education – barriers.

SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time has expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Before I start, I want to take the opportunity to again thank the people of Stephenville - Port au Port District who have given me the honour of representing them in the House of Assembly. It's something that I really take a lot of pride in and look forward to continuing to do so.

I'd also like to add my welcome to the students of Heritage Collegiate of Lethbridge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: While today you are in the gallery, I look forward to the day when some of you will be sitting in these seats and doing exactly what we're doing today.

Speaker, the budget this year is a significant amount of money being spent: \$9.8 billion. That's a huge amount of money. Yet, if you look at some of the challenges facing our province, when we talk about cost of living, when we talk about access to primary health care, affordability to continue to stay in this province, the question that gets asked is: Are we making the right investments?

While we are spending a significant amount of money, are we really targeting the people who need that extra help? There are a lot of initiatives in this book that I would argue are measures, but what we really need is a strategy. We had a poverty reduction strategy; we had a very good poverty reduction strategy. As a matter of fact, it was considered to be one of the best in the country. But it was put aside. I believe it's time to start really thinking about this in a much bigger, broader way than simply talking about measures and one-time measures.

We're spending the money; we don't need to spend more money. What we need to do is make sure that we target that investment to help the people who truly need our help in the province.

The Premier recently in an interview on the news talked about or promised to revisit the funding of Memorial University, their funding levels. Now, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador has been in the news recently for all the wrong reasons. One of the challenges that happened in last year's budget, the freeze on tuition, was eliminated. It was going to be increased over the next five years.

That has had a significant impact on the students at Memorial University and also on the fact that enrolment went down by 19 per cent. So it's having an impact, not only on the university, but on our whole community and on our province.

I would think that value of education is one of our top priorities as a government, as an Opposition, as a province. Providing education that is affordable to our people, to our students is something that we should continue to do. It wasn't that long ago that a \$500 infrastructure increase was added to costs at Memorial University and this \$500, the students couldn't even claim it on their income tax, but it was added to their fees. There was course fees, maintenance fees.

So today I stand in this House of Assembly, and my colleague from Conception Bay South, yesterday, spoke about it in the media. He has asked for and talked about the government freezing tuition fees until the Auditor General completes her review. I stand here today to support that. I call upon the Finance Minister or the Premier to stand in this House and commit to freezing tuition fees at Memorial University until such time as the Auditor General can complete her review.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: One of the other questions that was asked about yesterday in relation to the budget is housing. We all know, and my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans brought up the issue about the significant increase in the numbers of people looking for housing in our province; a 55 per cent increase in the number of people now looking for housing in our province. While the budget includes money for new units. There is still 290, almost 300 units in our province, right now, that are unoccupied. Two hundred and ninety units owned by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, owned by the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that are unfit to live in.

Imagine if you were a property owner in any community in this province and you had a house in that community that was unfit to live in, that town council or that city would be after you to repair it. So imagine that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador with 290 units that cannot be occupied. Are we the biggest slum landlord in the province? Because that's what it feels like.

So my question to the minister is: Will you commit to ensuring that all 290 units in the province will be repaired in this fiscal year and will be occupied before the end of the year? Because those units already exist. It's a great initiative to build more, but we have 290 units right now in our system that could be put to use, but because they are not fit to occupy, they remain vacant. So, again, that's a commitment.

Part of the problem or challenge with that may be the fact – as we heard – that there is a 20 per cent vacancy in staff at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Government at one time was an employer of choice. People wanted to work in government departments in places like Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and others. So, again, is the minister prepared to commit to filling those vacancies, to doing what's necessary so that the people who do the work at Newfoundland and Labrador

Housing can get on with their jobs and can get these units repaired and we can get those units up and people in them? Because that's extremely important.

I know out my way, we have challenges with recruitment of staff sometimes in maintenance departments in Transportation. So we have challenges that we need addressed. We have positions but we do not have them filled. So we really have to concentrate on how do we fill those positions? Because we've all heard the stories, especially in the winter, when a grader goes down or a flyer goes down and there's nobody there to repair it or we're short on mechanics. So the opportunities are there, what we have to do is find a way to fill those positions. I think that's got to be part of the process of what we're about to do today.

Again, think about 290 units that can be occupied, if they were repaired and how do we get those 290 units repaired because that is a significant amount and a significant investment. So I would just like to know, if the money is there that will repair these units this year, they can be occupied and people can be living in them. That is a significant investment.

Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to follow up on another issue. Yesterday, my colleague from Harbour Main spoke very passionately in this House of Assembly about violence against women, about homelessness. My colleague from Torngat Mountains just gave a very passionate speech about what's happening in her district and these are very, very serious issues that should impact all of us and we should all be there to do something about it.

I want to read out a message I received recently and make some comments on it because it comes from a different angle, I suspect, or approach. This person said to me – and I quote – we have a homelessness issue. The current government is paying for these individuals

to stay in local hotels. I know this because the hotel, at which I'm employed, is steady taking people in as an emergency shelter. We have several rooms designated for them. Although I'm grateful that we are able to provide this service and keep these individuals off the street, I am also concerned that we are not equipped nor qualified to deal with some of these people.

We have taken women and children in who have left relationships due to domestic violence. We have had individuals in with severe mental health and addiction issues. The safety concern is that we are a hotel. We are not counsellors. We are not a shelter. We cannot and do not provide any safety or protection for these people. There is nothing stopping an ex-partner, for example, from coming into the hotel and harming these women. We can't help those who have serious mental health and addiction issues and have meltdowns or psychotic episodes. It's a very dangerous situation for us as well as the clients we are providing shelter for.

So that is a very serious concern raised by a worker in a hotel who is dealing with this issue every day. So, to me, it highlights the significant importance that we have to find ways to do things differently. We have to find a way to respond to this message. Because this is a call raising a legitimate concern about the people who are homeless and also about the people who are trying to provide that hotel room and that care for them.

The services are not there, and that's what this message is all about. How do we fix this? How do we address this? That is part of what all of this is about. How do we address this particular issue to ensure these women who are running away from domestic violence have a safe place to go to and that simply putting someone in a hotel takes them off the street, but are we really providing a service? That's the message that I see here. That's the message that's being delivered.

Like I said a few minutes ago, the budget, \$9.8 billion, is a huge amount of money. Yet today, we've heard speaker after speaker talk about the impacts on affordability of people of our province. We've heard the measures, how effective those measures are and the actual total amount of money. My colleague alluded to 19 cents a day.

These are why measures aren't just good enough. You need a strategy. The whole principle of income support and poverty is not a simple discussion. It is a complete discussion and we need a complete review of the Income Support program and all of the other programs that are put in place to help people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a lot of great programs, but have the levels kept up with the rate of inflation? Are people left behind because their income is slightly above the threshold? We need to review all of those. We need to review those thresholds. These are the type of things that need to be happening. We need a complete review.

While measures are welcome, they are not the solution. The solution is a real strategy; a strategy that deals with people; a strategy like we had before; a strategy that will get people back to work, that will help people afford to live here. We cannot afford to have people leave Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to keep them here. We need to keep our youth here. We need to make sure that their education is affordable so that they can continue to work and stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We need to keep our seniors in their own homes so they don't have to leave, so they can afford to stay there and even when a partner dies – and this has happened many times – you'll find a situation where two seniors are living in their own home and they're managing to stay there because they both have an income. But when one partner dies, all of a sudden the income is cut in half and now the expenses start to pile up and they can't afford it.

We've talked about a program – we want people to stay at home as long as they can before they go into a nursing home or a personal care home. Yet, while we have home care programs to do that, in many, many parts of our province we have no home care workers. Part of that goes back to how we compensate and how we train, because right now working in home care is considered a job; it is not considered a career. People are not lining up to take a career in home care supports. Think about that.

We've made some changes to look after our young with the program and the increase in funding for early child educators. But if you think about the fact that our most vulnerable, whether it is our young babies, our young kids before school or whether it is our seniors who want to live in their own homes, we have a responsibility to make sure that we provide adequate funding to allow people to choose careers. Because that is a career; that is a great responsibility.

When you're a home care worker, you're looking after some of the most vulnerable people in our society. We need to make sure they have the proper training and we need to make sure that they have the proper qualifications and dollar value associated with that job so that it doesn't become a job; it becomes a career. That is how we will keep people in their homes longer if we are able to find a way so that home care is a career choice. That early child educator is a career choice. Those are things that need to happen.

If you want to really understand that, go talk to some of the people that provide those services. Go have a conversation with a home care worker or with an early child educator and ask them what could we be doing better. How could we change what we're doing? That's the type of discussion that we need to have because then maybe we could allow that to happen.

I know in my district, and I'm sure in other Members' districts, there are lots of people who have been approved for – quote – home care, but have no access to it. It's the same issue that we see in child care. So we need to do better. Those are the type of things that we can talk about. Lots of times when we talk about access or we talk about affordability, we try to say it's a national issue. We have our own \$9.8 billion that we're spending as a province. That's our budget: \$9.8 billion.

So we have to find a way. We have to find a way to look after the people who built this province. We have to find a way to look after the youth to keep them here in this province, to give them quality education so they can in turn come here one day, as I said to the group above, and sit here in the House of Assembly and represent districts all over this great province of ours.

Speaker, we just have to do it better. I would argue that we must do better, we can do better and we will do better.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, I just wanted to ask if the Member who just spoke could table the document that he read from. The points that the author made, I would like to have them on the record so that I could respond as well.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to speak here this morning in this hon. House and in front of the students of which I spoke with on December 15, the students of Heritage Collegiate high school in Lethbridge. This is Ms. Dooley's social studies class.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: It's too bad I can't get a visual. If they were on this side, I could get a visual of them, but I know they look good. I know that.

I wanted to give you a little bit of history or a little bit of background on Heritage Collegiate. I think the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology may be most interested in the fact that I believe and would contend – and while I don't have data to present – that the beginning of robotics would have occurred at Heritage Collegiate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I know it certainly did in the District of Bonavista and the Clarenville area because eventually in Clarenville, we introduced a robotics program. I know that the teacher moved from Heritage Collegiate up to Clarenville and the gist of that was that he would then start the robotics. How significant was the robotics program that they started? Well, we have now in Clarenville, which was SubC and some of the people who worked at SubC have got experiences and in their schooling that they have the robotics program that began at Heritage Collegiate.

Another thing that the House should be aware of, once we're talking technology, is one of the students from Heritage Collegiate moved on to be very successful in business. He started a business with two other colleagues and his name was – wait for it – Jamie King.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Jamie King and two others started Verafin. Jamie came from Heritage Collegiate. His father was the principal of the school in L. R. Ash before Heritage of which I started teaching. I would say, Jamie has gone on to be very successful and now doing well as his company was bought out

by NASDAQ. He is now gainfully employed with NASDAQ.

I would say Heritage Collegiate here today has got a lot of background and I celebrate the success of the school today and as it was years ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: For the benefit of the class, we are debating the budget. Everyone who stands on their feet here in this House today, it's to talk about the budget.

I'm going to have another go at telling the government where they can increase their revenue in order to provide the programs that every one of us wishes to respond. But before I do that, I just want to recognize and state one event that occurred in the District of Bonavista recently.

On March 6, the fire department in Port Rexton responded to a fire call. As happens, those who are able to get a minimum number to respond, they headed to the fire. They started to put the flames out in the home. Other firefighters were coming on the scene. There was radio contact to let them know what they needed to do to suit up.

One firefighter, Steven Kew, responded. The chief told him to bunker up and get on the other side of the fire truck. The fire chief tells the story that eventually it was one of the neighbours who came over and tapped him on the shoulder and said someone was lying on the ground on the other side of the fire truck.

The fire chief immediately secured the hose and went around to the other side of the fire truck where he found Steven Kew. He was in cardiac distress. His colour said it all. He went through the process of making sure that he wasn't breathing, no pulse.

The moral of the story would be that those firefighters provided CPR, but it was only

through the AED that was available that the fire department had and after four shocks, today he may be watching from his home in Champney's and doing well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: But without that AED, it wouldn't have happened. Those firefighters, the ones that saved his life and responded, will be here on May 23 for a Member's statement. They will be in the gallery. So I do look forward to that.

Now, everyone is interested and saying what is he talking about increasing the revenue for the provincial coffers? I don't want to jump right into it; I want to create a little bit of suspense.

On April 17, I had the privilege of presenting at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. The topic of the committee at Fisheries and Oceans was seal predation. I guess there might have been addresses that I may have had in the House previously that I was invited to present.

Anyway, my hon. Member and my friend from Mount Pearl - Southlands had referenced the fishery earlier and he talked about joint management.

On October 19, 40 Members in the House of Assembly stood united in that we wanted to see a greater emphasis on good science in order to better predict our stocks and to make sure that our ecosystem was in fine order to supply or support a fishing industry – all 40 of us. Joint management says that we've got a seat at the table. Any decision about the fishery, we've got a seat at the table. So there are no more surprises; therefore, us being there. I would suggest that that would be something that we ought to do.

Here is the math. Our fishing industry, generally, brings in between \$1.2 billion and \$1.6 billion a year. Last year, the snow crab, and the year before, the markets indicated

that it was of high value; that's when we hit \$1.6 billion. We've said in this House before that if you rest on only harvesting one species in order to get your income, sometimes you're going to find that that species is not available or the market is not friendly towards your price that you're seeking. That is the time we find ourselves in now.

Everyone in the House would know that our total commercial fishery, inshore and offshore, we harvest 186,000 metric tons, a variety of species –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: Not seals, but a variety of other fish species that we get our income on. So keep that in mind: 186,000 metric tons gives our province and our revenue \$1.6 billion at peak time when snow crab is good.

The Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills had shared a video of seals that was taken recently off the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland. He showed a picture that it was miles and miles and miles of seals that were covering and littering the ice. Nobody objects to seals. The only thing we agree with is that there's got to be a balance in the ecosystem.

If we took 10 million wolves and put them on the Island of Newfoundland and Labrador and they were running rampant predation and on farmers' fields, what would we do about it? I think we would address it. We'd make sure that we'd have that number reduced so that it is a friendly part of our ecosystem that other species could flourish and other things could happen. Our Department of Fisheries and Oceans would state – so keep in mind 186,000 metric tons equates to 1.6 billion when the snow crab is good and in a good market.

They predict – DFO – that the seals on the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, stretching from the bottom of Labrador down to the Avalon Peninsula, all

along the East Coast, they consume 3.2 million metric tons per year. Our commercial fishery that provides a livelihood for Newfoundland and Labrador, rural Newfoundland, 186,000 metric tons. Predation, with over 10 million seals out there, 3.2 million metric tons; over 12 times the value of our commercial fishery.

So when we, on this side, would say we think that if we had checks and balances that the ecosystem wasn't out of whack with the predation of seals, we ought to be able to see our commercial harvest of fish increased. We would know that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, when they take their vessels out to the waters, will know that there are fish out there to catch.

Pelagic fish, like capelin, mackerel, herring, they are what seals eat most. DFO would suggest about 50 per cent of their appetite or their desire is the pelagic fish. Now, I was going to ask you to sit down because this number here is rather startling, but we are sitting. Harp seals alone – not the other species of seals, but harp seals alone – will eat, in one year, one million metric tons of capelin. Everyone says that capelin is the basis and the genesis of our fishery. Other species need capelin, the forage fish, in order to survive. They need it. We've got seals, harp seals in particular, DFO would state, eat one million metric tons.

So the question would be: What are we doing about that? What are we doing to address it, if even DFO is saying show us the news release where we've got action on the imbalance in our ecosystem? I would say, there is no release – no plan, no release.

My hon. colleague from Cape St. Francis mentioned yesterday that he had raised in the House several times about the Municipal Operating Grant. He was pleased to see it in the budget. It's true; he spoke about it a couple of times. Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, my hon. Member was talking about the hospice care and he had

mentioned that many times. My hon. friend from Topsail - Paradise, glucose monitors, numerous times. Are they pleased to see it in the budget? Yes. I felt a little dismayed yesterday because I said, well, of the times we all spoke about the fishery, was there anything in the budget on the fishery? Nothing different than what it was last year.

I can't speak beyond 2019, but the fishery, there is no plan that we have. There are things that we could be doing. I would say the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, when we were debating the collective bargaining act, he had stated, according to *Hansard* – which I concur with them – when he's referencing what the income is as a result of the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, he stated what it was. He said: We want that to double or triple in the next number of years and anything we can do to support that, we're going to try our best to.

Now, I would say, what your efforts are, we should try. The Minister of Fisheries quoted, in the article on February 23, the last paragraph of the *Navigator* magazine: The Premier asked me where I'd like to see the fishery in 20 years. In 20 years, I'd like to see it as strong as it is today.

Now, if you think that's the direction of which we, as a province, ought to be, I would concur with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change that it ought to be higher. We want it to be higher. It ought to be higher. In 20 years' time, it ought to be \$5 billion, \$6 billion, \$7 billion.

Before I conclude, I think I'll get another time –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm only interested in hearing the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me give some quotas. I've done this before but these are the latest ones. Think of where we are within the fishery, and I won't give you a species that we don't consume or fish very much. Norway, a northern country, Atlantic cod: 708,480 metric tons; Iceland: 180,000 metric tons; Newfoundland and Labrador: 13,000 metric tons. No plan, no news release. No plan and here it is.

Haddock: 180,000 metric tons in Norway and 33,000 metric tons in Iceland. We have it as a bycatch of less than 1,000. You got to be less than 1,000 metric tons for haddock.

Mackerel: 298,000 metric tons in Norway and 140,000 metric tons in Iceland. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we are under a moratorium; you're not allowed to catch mackerel.

Then comes capelin. We know that harp seals, according to DFO, take one million metric tons a year – one million metric tons. Capelin in Norway: 70,000 metric tons. They share their quota with Russia. Iceland: 200,000 metric tons; Newfoundland and Labrador: 24,758 metric tons.

The last one I'll share is herring. Herring in Norway: 454,000 metric tons; 68,000 metric tons: Iceland; Newfoundland and Labrador: 20,000 metric tons.

I would say to you, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port had cited before, that what Glenn Blackwood said was that our fishery is our only true renewable megaproject, and he's right. But when we look back at the industry and find out on sealing that we haven't had a news release since Minister Crocker, I think, was minister back in 2016. We've been silent. There's been nothing. All while our species that we fish commercially is being eaten by predation. Not being harvested to support rural Newfoundland in their fishing communities, but only on the diets of seals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A great speech, I say to the Member. I know the Member mentioned about the AEDs that saved a firefighter's life. I know back in Municipal Affairs back in 2015, 2016, 2017, the AEDs that saved a firefighter's life, at the end of it, the special assistance, we used to put \$100,000 a year aside to buy 30 AEDs to give out around the province. I encourage the government to continue on with that program which was stopped in 2019, because it does save lives, it does save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand here today and speak for a second. You want to talk about why you need Opposition, why you need people with a bit of history. I look at the press release this weekend about Grieg moving the processing of the farmed salmon to Bay de Verde.

I'm going to read the press release that was put out. I was part of it then and I know the mayor. You fought hard I say to the Member; you were the mayor. I know you're upset about this; you have to be. I know you are because I know how much you care about your town. I'm going to read it: "Today in Marystown, representatives from Grieg NL officially launched the company's \$250 million aquaculture project" Here's the part, too, Mr. Speaker: "... and processing facilities" This was the whole concept for that whole area to prosper through this.

I'll just read down through the press release: "... with environmental conditions, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will provide repayable financial assistance to support the development, totalling up to \$30 million, through the Aquaculture Capital Equity Program. Provincial funding will complement a \$10 million repayable federal investment through the Atlantic Canada

Opportunities Agency's Business Development Program."

I just wanted to read a few quotes from the members at the time. Churence Rogers, the MP: "... will strengthen the communities on the Burin Peninsula around Placentia Bay, spur economic growth and support the creation of hundreds of good, well-paying jobs."

I have Carol Anne Haley, the former Member for Burin - Grand Bank: "These kinds of new developments are exactly what we need to reinvigorate our rural communities and create spin off benefits for the processing sector."

So when you wonder why you need Opposition and when you wonder why you need them to raise the issues, this is a prime example. This money was put in for the Burin Peninsula to create these jobs. Now we know that they even did work on the processing facility in St. Lawrence. They even did work on the processing facility. Now the processing is being taken from St. Lawrence and going to Bay de Verde with the government funding, with the commitment, signed agreement that the processing would be done in St. Lawrence. So this is why you need Opposition.

P. PIKE: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: What?

P. PIKE: How does that impact Marbase?

E. JOYCE: How do that impact Marbase?

I say to the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, I know you're fighting for it. I know because I sat in on meetings with you back then when this was going ahead. This is a blow to the Burin Peninsula. This is a blow and this is why you need to keep government accountable. This is why you need to say okay, you made a commitment to these people, I was part of that commitment. I was

down and met with that group and now the commitment is broken. It's wrong.

So where the government put in this money to create this economic development for the Burin Peninsula, now it's not done. What else can the government just make a commitment to and walk away? This is why you need to keep government accountable. This is exactly why you need to do that.

So I'll get off on that now, but I just wanted to have a little preamble on that, Mr. Speaker, because I could tell you one thing, and I'm probably on the other end of it, too, if that ever happened in the Humber - Bay of Islands, I'd be the first one standing up and saying no, it's not going to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

E. JOYCE: It doesn't matter to me because they are the people that elected me. They're the people that I've got to go home and see every weekend. They're the people that stop me by my door and have a chat every day. They're the people who need to pay their light bills. They need to pay their grocery bills. They need to pay their mortgage. They are the people that I will stand up for and I've made a habit of that all my life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I'm just going to talk about a few of the things that I know my colleague from Mount Pearl – Southlands mentioned before, about seniors. Last Friday, I had the great pleasure of attending the Salvation Army volunteer dinner to recognize volunteers that help out the Salvation Army. A lot of those people, Mr. Speaker, will help with the food banks. They serve the meals. These are local people, very concerned about their fellow man. They come and freely give their time because they see the most vulnerable.

When you hear the stories about the increase of the food bank, when you hear

stories about now they've got to try to expand or have a second dinner, you know that there's something missing in our programs for people. There's something missing.

I'm not going to start pointing fingers at anybody, but I'm just raising this point that when you hear from the common people who are serving the people who are most vulnerable and they're telling you that we have a problem, there's a problem. How do we solve the problem? Giving \$500 to people who are making \$100,000 ain't going to work. It just ain't going to work.

We need to come up with a targeted program that could help the most vulnerable people. It is an issue and we can stand here in this House and whoever wants to stand up and say we gave this, we gave that, we put this into it or we put this money for seniors. Yet, somehow we're missing the most vulnerable people of this province. If anybody was at that dinner with me – and it was a pleasure to be there, to speak at the volunteer dinner – you would hear the stories. You would actually hear their stories.

Do I think that we can take every person who is vulnerable and say, okay, we can find a way? No, but I think we must find some type of program that can help the most vulnerable. If anybody thinks that is not real, anybody over on the opposite side thinks it's not real, it's time for you to get outside your little bubble. It's really time to get outside the bubble, because I can tell you there are a lot of vulnerable people.

The Member responsible for Housing, the Minister of CSSD, I got to give him credit. He does respond and he does work at things, trying to get things moving. I brought up to him before about the emergency units in Corner Brook that need to be done and we got it open again for another year. I have to recognize that. That's the good work.

I know there are 60 units up in the Corner Brook area that needs repairs. We could put in 60 families. I know it's on your list now. I've written you and it's on the list. But those are the kinds of things – I'm not bringing this to your attention to say, okay, let's get brownie points or let's say pound the government. You bring it to the minister's attention. The minister solves it, works with the local people on the ground to get – that's the way it should be. I give the minister full credit for that because you did save a lot of vulnerable people from sleeping on the streets. You did, and that's what we should do.

So when you're in Opposition and you bring things up, it's not because you want to say I want a good crack at the government or try to embarrass the government. It's not. It's to help the people you represent. This is a prime example, and I know there are a few others over there also, that when you bring issues, they try to solve them and it's never heard. Yet, the people that reap the benefit are the most vulnerable when the results are done. That's the way it should be, Mr. Speaker.

I give full credit to a few ministers over there that work that way. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I know we're working on something for Lark Harbour. Can I guarantee it's going to be done? No. But the minister, when I brought it to his attention, he said we'll look into it. There's one place in the whole Bay of Islands that haven't even got water. An application went in, looking for, as the number one priority that I put in for the whole district – and I know the town council met with the MP and I know that we'll work something out for that. We'll work something out. We may not get the full amount, the \$3 million, to do the whole water and sewer project, but we need something to encourage the people.

The minister made no commitments, but the only commitment he made was that he'll look into it and see what he could do. But

that's the way it should be. That's why it should be, that we work together.

I brought up cataracts on many occasions, and people I know have presented petitions upon petitions. I was in the media, *Open Line*. They put in 500 cataracts for Western Newfoundland and what happened then is the minister started negotiations with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association to try and make this on a go-forward basis. I don't know what's going to happen to that. It should be done. Every year, the aging population, the demographics will suffice that we need the 500 extra per year, on a go-forward basis.

We hear, well, you've got to vote for the budget. But how could I vote for a budget that right now we say yeah, here are 500, and if it's not on a go-forward basis, I'll be back here next year saying there's another wait-list? The wait-list has doubled again. So these are the kind of things that we need resolved. This is the type of issue that I shouldn't be on a regular basis before this was done in this House, on *Open Line* – I thank Paddy Daly for giving me the time – in the media, presenting petitions on something for people's safety. It shouldn't be done. I should not have to be doing that. Then at a click of the fingers, 3,000 for St. John's.

So this is the kind of thing that I say to the government that you always ask well, what are your ideas? What are your options? When you give them options, it's almost like they can't work. But eventually, after pressure, it does work. These are the kind of things that we and the Members here – and the hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, we speak a lot on the issues that we've got to raise, is that this is the kind that we've got to raise for government. Just don't take it and push it aside because the people we're representing are real people. They have struggles; they have concerns. I heard the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board say okay, give us some ideas. I've brought up ideas in this House

and I'll bring up another one, Mr. Speaker. I'll bring it up and I could even –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: News article.

Nurse practitioners in Corner Brook – now, the Member for Corner Brook and I know the Member for St. George's - Humber, he's getting the same calls because I'm getting them too from your district and you're probably getting them for my district, too. This is not a knock on family doctors. Now, this is all across. This is not a political thing because we've got them in all of our districts, people without a family doctor.

Nurse practitioners: If we would allow them to bill the MCP, it would take some load off the emergency departments at our hospitals. When I heard the minister say here that he has no plans to pay for care by private nurse practitioners, that means he can do it. Then why can't he do it? Because he doesn't have the political will to do it. There are three in Corner Brook setting up. Here's the article; I don't know who seen it. I'm sure that it was on CBC. I spoke to them again yesterday on this here. If you want to talk about how we can help the most vulnerable: nurse practitioners. It's so simple. It is actually doable. It is actually doable.

So when we stand up and we say there are people calling us who haven't got a family doctor and when you hear about – I'll tell you cases that I hear about the emergency department. One person went in for 14 hours, his wife, had to leave; couldn't get in. Came back the next night, another 14 hours. Do you know what he did? Flew to Toronto because he couldn't get in to emergency. Got a referral, go to Toronto; couldn't get in.

How many stories do we hear, especially in Western Newfoundland, about the emergency departments? It's not the staffs fault; they're just overburdened. I mean,

when you need a prescription, just for simple blood work that you have to do every year, you have to go to the emergency department to get it.

If anybody was on thyroid, which is a lifetime thing, thyroid, people bring it to my attention, a lifelong thing. Every year you just need a prescription from the doctor. You have to go to emergency to get it.

If you want a driver's licence done, a senior needs a driver's licence and here it is an opportunity for a government to make a difference.

So when the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board stands up and says: What would you do? How would you help out? Here it is: nurse practitioners. They're not asking. Government can even help, if they want help to set up an office, Mr. Speaker, they can even set up, but all they're asking is to be able bill MCP.

Do you know how many calls I get from seniors, mainly seniors, who are desperate? They get an appointment with the nurse practitioners, then they realize they have to dish over \$65, \$70 out of their own pocket, and we're talking about free health care in this province. We have a way to solve it and we won't solve it.

This to me, it's almost like the cataracts; you have to fight for two or three years for people to get back their eyesight. This is almost getting that feeling that you have to grab hold of this.

When you speak to the nurse practitioners, when you speak to the seniors, when you speak to the people who can't get into the emergency because of the overcrowding at the emergency department, and here we can help out and we're not doing it. We're just not doing it.

I don't know of a person in this House who haven't received a call about a family

doctor. I don't know of a person in this House who never received a call.

P. LANE: Tons.

E. JOYCE: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands says tons. But why don't we look at that? Why don't we look at nurse practitioners? Why don't we find a way to make this work? Why don't we find a way?

This is something that we can get done. I say to the Minister of Health and Community Services: this can be done. This would alleviate a lot of concerns, a lot of health visits to the emergency departments. It would help all districts. I know in Western Newfoundland, it would help all districts. I know the Member for Corner Brook, same thing; it would help his district. St. George's - Humber, it would help his district, up Massey Drive, Pasadena area, that would definitely help his area also.

So here is an opportunity with the nurse practitioners that we can get this done because all we've got to do is let them bill MCP, which the minister, from his comments, can do it. He can do it.

I'm asking the minister to reconsider your decision of not allowing the nurse practitioners to bill MCP. It says here, the headlines from the CBC: Newfoundland has no plans to pay for care by private nurse practitioners.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister is saying we're not going to pay private nurse practitioners, why don't we find some way to get them under Western Health and put them out in the community? Let Western health pay the extra remuneration that they would need and then we can pay them that way, if that's the issue.

But when you're a private nurse, as CBC is reporting, and you're out as a nurse practitioner, you're a civil servant who is doing a duty to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. There has got

to be a way that we can settle up in this day and age that a nurse practitioner – they're doing it across Canada, they're doing it in other places, so why can't we do it here? It's just like –

P. LANE: They're doing it for doctors.

E. JOYCE: We're doing it for doctors, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands says doctors are all private businesses. The family doctors –

P. LANE: Hiring private nurses in the health care in the hospitals.

E. JOYCE: Private nurses in the health care in the hospitals. So it can be done. It can be done. We just need to find a way.

I'd be the first one to come out, if the minister does it and the government does it and allow nurse practitioners to bill MCP, I'll be the first one out singing their praises saying we just helped them, a lot of people, thousands and thousands of people; thousands and thousands of people who we could help just by that move.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in this hon. House to speak on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

The first thing I'd like to mention, I guess, I'd like to start off on a very positive note and acknowledge last week as National Volunteer Week: Volunteering Weaves Us Together is the theme. It's very true

because none of our towns are able to do anything without the kindness and the openness of our volunteers.

I was lucky enough to be invited to attend a volunteer appreciation night in Marystown. It was run quite well. It was nice to see a really big turnout I got to say. It was so important to a town the size of Marystown for the simple fact that it's the hub of the Burin Peninsula. It's where all the economic growth and everything is probably going to be seen first. What we're doing now is we're kind of doing our own regionalization type of thing where we kind of feel now on the Burin Peninsula that we are all as one. I work closely with my colleague, the MHA for Burin - Grand Bank, on many initiatives, including health care and the economy.

Like I said, it's about working together, it's about what we can do to let our residents peacefully enjoy our beautiful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and to be able to go out and acknowledge and rise up in gratefulness to our volunteers which are second to none. I would recommend that it's done by everybody because they are the backbone of our whole economic system, to be quite honest, to see the different organizations and individuals who volunteer.

As a volunteer, the true meaning of volunteering is that you're giving up a piece of your life that you're not even looking for recognition for. When you have something like a volunteer night, it's so heartwarming to be able to say thank you to these people who put in countless hours.

But the other thing that I brought up in my address to the room that night was that I want people throughout the province to realize that our municipal governments, our mayors and councillors, these are volunteers as well. I don't think that they get really the respect, I guess, that they deserve.

I'm not saying they don't get any respect; don't get me wrong. There's lots of respect

and stuff like that, but to give up your time and to still hold down another job in order to do this just shows the measure of a person, I guess, kind of thing to put their community first, if that's done in a tasteful way.

But I would always say, for all measures, we need to be very grateful for our municipal councils. I am very grateful for all municipal councils in my district. I have 36 towns, including LSDs. I have some unincorporated areas that have rec committees and stuff like that, but it's about working with them. Anything that I bring forward on behalf of a municipality, an LSD, a rec committee or any organization, it's generated from them.

The reason why I don't mind bringing it forward, whether I agree with what I'm fighting for with them – whether I agree with it or not, it's not a personal decision and I'm not here to judge anybody. I'm here to support the people of Placentia West - Bellevue and give them an opportunity to have an attachment to their government and the government services. That's the whole point, and that's what we're all here to do.

That's why I keep stressing the fact that we have 40 Members in this hon. House that need to look after 530,000. That's where our heads need to be. It's not about who's right and who's wrong. It's the reds or the blues or the oranges that done this. That's not the point. We all have a job to do. But we must do it in a cohesive, respectful and integral way. That's how the work is going to get done. That's what I always stress to my municipal councils because sometimes there are going to be disagreements and stuff like that, but that's healthy. We're supposed to disagree. Nobody comes up with an idea and we run to fruition with it, without it being adjusted or meandered in some way.

So that's what I'm trying to say that when we elect these municipal officials, we have to show them the respect that they stepped up because, otherwise, I would expect the person that's complaining to step up the

next time, just to see everything that goes into volunteering. Yeah, there's a small tax break and stuff like that but I mean, at the end of the day, when we look at the cost of living, there's a lot more coming out of our pockets, just getting the meetings than this little stipend would equate to not having any out-of-pocket costs.

I'm very pleased to see that the budget increased the Municipal Operating Grants. It's been needed for quite some time. To do \$3 million this year and \$3 million next year brings them to the \$28 million that they requested.

As my colleague from Terra Nova alluded to, as we move to electrification of our vehicles and our homes, we have to ask the question: Do we have the capacity to supply that power and what does that look like for people from urban as opposed to rural? Because when we look at that and we know that there was an uptake of less than 0.5 per cent, then what we are saying is that not even the rich people can afford this program. Not even the 1 per cent has picked up on this program. So, to me, there are other ways that we can find incentives to make our communities and our residents better.

To see the Municipal Operating Grant go up is great, but at what point are Municipal Operating Grants not going to be available if they're based on the gas tax? That's the whole point. We need to move forward and understand this.

There's no sense of us being reactive to that when it's in our face and we have no other choice but to deal with it. Let's be proactive today and consequently in future budgets, so that we mitigate against this that's going to happen in the future, because that's what our government is telling us is that we need to go towards this greener economy. I agree with that. I don't want this planet to be left in worse shape than when I showed up, but in my 53 years I've seen a fair bit of changes, we'll say.

One of the big ones is wearing seat belts. When we were growing up, nobody even considered wearing seat belts. We had a wagon and you'd call getting out in the very back back, we used to call it. We could go out there; you could take a pillow and stuff like that or whatever. You could almost make a little camp out of it. They had to make it up, put the luggage all around and make sure that there's a spot back there for somebody.

Again, times change and there's no problem with that. But the one thing that we guarantee in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador going forward is that we have to be open to change. We can't be reactive. We need to be proactive. We have to see these changes coming and we have to mitigate against them long before they become an issue or a problem.

A couple of consequences, just look at our doctor situation. Another consequence is look at our nursing situation. Another consequence is look at our teaching assistant situation. Another situation is about our home care workers. Another situation is about our ECEs. I don't think I need to go on any further.

Speaker, what I am trying to say is that we can have as many budgets as we want and \$9.8 billion is not the budget that I voted for back in 2019; at that point in time, I think it was \$6.8 billion. So to be at \$9.8 billion now seems to be that we're throwing money at stuff, but are we putting it in the right areas or are we just putting Band-Aids on big, open wounds? That seems to be the problem. We have to stop being reactive; we need to be proactive.

Just to stay with our Volunteer Week, I want to do a big-shout out to Long Harbour-Mount Arlington Heights. I was just there this past Saturday and I was able to go to their volunteer appreciation night and give out some awards. We honoured our fire and emergency services people there. I had three people there that were there for 40

years. Volunteered for 40 years on their fire department in their home community. Unfortunately I didn't have a certificate or an arm bar or anything to give them that night because on our application for fire and emergency services the last box to be checked off is 35 years. So I guess we're not expecting people to go beyond that 35 years.

I have Bill Hurley over in Norman's Cove-Long Cove, 50 years of service with his fire department. Cecil Warren, same thing, he is teetering up around 40 or 45 years, I think, himself. I'm not sure if I gave Cecil a few extra years that time or not, but I'm sure he is going to let me know. But I appreciate these people. I have Melvin Peach in Arnold's Cove, another fellow with 50 years.

So I would say to Fire and Emergency Services that while we do have a minute few, let's see if we can expand the reward program to acknowledge these people that are more than 35 years and that might be an opportunity to show our appreciation in a real way.

One thing that I talked about during my address in both volunteer nights was how appreciative we should be of our fire and emergency services that we have in our communities. Not every community is that fortunate.

Trying to move around a few assets, I'm the type of fellow that tries to get three nickels out of every dime, but in working with the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I'm hoping that this year we're going to get more than two bunker suits for 16 fire departments. Like I said, we're working together and he understands the needs and stuff like that. Those needs are not unique to Placentia West - Bellevue and I understand that. But the thing that we need to realize is that where I have 36 towns and not every town can have a fire department, some are paying that one-third more in insurance because they're not within 13 kilometres of a fire department. We have

mutual aid agreements where towns are covered off by certain fire departments.

One of the things that we seem to lose track of is that these people are volunteers. I have one paid chief in Marystown; a great guy, very knowledgeable, lives, eats, breathes – everything – sleeps fire and emergency services, right after his family. His family comes first and I expect that. That's what shows how much integrity that man has.

We're going into wind farms and stuff like that. He had EverWind Fuels and some of the partners there that are looking at – got applications in for starting wind farms and that were doing a training session down in Texas. Chief Bolt went to that and done the training. I will assure you that he's going to bring that back. He's not going to keep that training to himself; he's going to impart that on his membership. His membership trusts him and I'll be quite honest, he's worth trusting. His heart is in the right place; he's a community-minded person. I have to be honest, for all intents and purposes, I almost hope he's not listening because he's liable to keep asking for stuff now that he knows that I like him. He's genuinely a good guy and that's the reason that we have the membership that we have.

I'll tell you right now, he's got awful big boots to fill when he's following up behind Alex Coady and Gerard Kelly, I can tell you that right now. These are great men, they were great fire chiefs in our town, but they were the last of the volunteer fire chiefs. I assure you the fire and emergency services memberships are all volunteers and I support them unequivocally.

I've told people I've volunteered all my life. I'm probably one of the only people that can say that I started volunteering before I was born, for the simple fact that I was in my mom's belly when they started the Family Aid in Marystown. I alluded to that the other day in a previous address to the House and

I'm proud of that. I went on and volunteered all my life with many different organizations.

But when you represent volunteer firefighters, I take a step back from understanding any volunteering that I've done and I've done a lot, I'll be honest. From coaching hockey and soccer to helping make cold plates and distribute hampers during Christmas. I've done lots of volunteering, but to be a volunteer firefighter just shows a whole different level. I think that they get the respect and I think they deserve that respect that they get from all the communities.

The Baine Harbour fire department, for instance, they're down there and I've worked with them to get a new fire hall. They had a fairly new fire truck but they used to have to haul it out in order to put on their bunker gear. They had to haul out the fire truck so that they have enough room to put on their bunker gear to get on the truck to go to a fire.

Then we have a service vehicle that, unfortunately, I think its best days are behind him, we'll say, Speaker. We're talking about upwards of 350,000 to 400,000 kilometres on this service vehicle. When it went to go into – actually, it made a call into the Burin - Grand Bank District because they were going to a call down in the Bay L'Argent area which is part of the Burin - Grand Bank District. So that really makes it a regional fire department. If we're looking for money, then it can probably come from both districts.

The truck broke down on the way. So what did that do for the people that were in an emergent situation where they needed the fire department? It was a big delay. Fortunately, they did get there on time and there were no fatalities or a big loss or anything like that and they managed to get through it. But their request to me that night – and I mean 11 or 12 that night – was calling me to say: Jeff, this is not good

enough. Sorry, Speaker, I shouldn't have used my own name.

But I'm there to support them. They deserve so much more respect. But when you see a little fellow – I did a Member's statement on little Jay that raised the money for the fire department in Baine Harbour. When we got a nine-year-old that's been raising money since he was six to help out his fire department, well, I'm going to say he's already a man because I'll tell you right now, there's nobody with a bigger heart than that. He's taught me a lot in just knowing that he's out there making all this effort.

It's so important to see and we can learn a lot from that, because out of the mouths of babes is a lot of innocence. When you sit and you talk to this young man, his heart is in the right place. You know what; I'm not going to lie to you. I've got a feeling this is a young man that could end up being a fire chief in the very department that he's currently helping. That young man is from Boat Harbour and the fire department is in Baine Harbour.

Baine Harbour covers off all those communities. They have an aid agreement to help all those communities – Parkers Cove, Boat Harbour, Brookside – and they do a great job of it, but they're also responsible for the highway. So if there's an motor vehicle accident on the highway, they're getting that call. Marystown ends up being the secondary and helping them out, but Marystown is also secondary to Burin, Winterland and all these other ones in the region. So it's a big trickle-down effect in making sure they they've got the right equipment and the right training so that they're safe and on the job.

With that being said, we just took away NL911 where I've got an unincorporated area, we'll say, in my district called Arnold's Cove Station. It was the hub of economics at one time, but now it's just a small little village. We were very close to having

numbers on those houses so that they could be responded to through NL911. When it got moved into core government, that was one of the problems that was hiccupped in the plan. That all fell to the wayside.

So I'm going to pick up those pieces and I'm still going to try and get addresses on those houses so that we can get fire and emergency services down to them. It's about working with people. It's about working together. It's about making sure we are doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Not because there are eyes on us, not because we want to satiate people, but we do the right thing because it's the right thing to do.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to get a few words in before lunch. First and foremost, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for her budget, but more importantly, just in three short years she has brought us from the brink of financial disaster to budget surpluses. That wasn't done without a lot of hard work, a lot of focus and a lot of discipline. I appreciate everything she's done for us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: The other thing the Minister of Finance does quite well – and I can attest to that, given what's in the budget for housing – is she listens to her caucus Members, she listens to the stakeholders and she does listen to the Opposition because even they've acknowledged she's listening. So thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: The budget achieves the right balance and I think that's something we need to also consider.

One thing I just wanted to bring to folks attention, in the Budget Speech itself, there are eight pages devoted to the social determinants of health. That is something that previous budgets, whether it's in this jurisdiction or across the country or elsewhere, has never done. If you look through and read through the language that's used, the funding that's committed, we are spending 68 per cent of our budget in social sector departments, of which mine is a beneficiary. The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is a beneficiary. We are spending the largest provincial investment in housing in this province through this budget, and that is something to be commended. We will see the benefits of that spending in very short order.

For example, there is \$70 million that's going towards affordable housing. We will see, over the next two to three years, an additional 850 affordable housing units in this province and that will be at a minimum. We're hoping through the process, working with the private sector, we can leverage further investment and we will see more than that allocation actually being constructed and people being housed.

We are spending \$25 million for people who are at risk of homelessness or intimate partner violence. That includes emergency shelters, transition homes and the Supportive Living Program. I know the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port talked and referenced some correspondence he had received. We've asked that be tabled because we are speaking specifically to those issues. We want to make sure that no individual has to sleep on the street, and today that is true. Do we have all the right supportive units in place? No, but we are working towards that. But if we don't, we'll make sure that there is a hotel room available right across the

province wherever it is needed. I, for one, do not want to see any tent cities in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: We are spending \$17 million towards maintaining and modernizing our provincial social housing portfolio right across the province. We have over 5,500 units in the province. We are the biggest landlord in the province. We have, as referenced yesterday –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

This being Wednesday, as per paragraph 9(1)(b) of the *Standing Orders* – are you going to adjourn debate and resume after?

J. ABBOTT: Yes.

SPEAKER: You will?

J. ABBOTT: Yes, Sir.

SPEAKER: Okay, you call for the motion for recess.

J. ABBOTT: I so move.

SPEAKER: This House do stand recessed until 2 this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Welcome, guests. In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome Marion McCarthy who is being recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon. Marion is joined by her colleagues from the Town of Flatrock.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for Districts of Baie Verte - Green Bay, Bonavista, Burin - Grand Bank, Terra Nova and Cape St. Francis.

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

B. WARR: Speaker, I rise to highlight Samantha's Saltwater Joys Museum in Fleur de Lys.

The museum and cafe pays a tribute of gratitude for the genuine kindness received during a time of deep grief. A not-for-profit venture of Millie Walsh to honour her daughter.

Samantha had a heart of gold and loved to sing "Saltwater Joys." I was born down by the water and its here I'm going to stay. After receiving a warm welcome, visitors express a feeling of peace and happiness and often plan their return before departure.

While visiting Fleur de Lys, one may also be interested in the hiking trails, including the Fleur de Lys lookout trail and the Ocean View Trail; Shelley's Island, a site of French migratory fishery; and the Dorset Soapstone Quarry. Although a point of interest since 1915, it holds archaeological evidence of prehistoric mining by more than one prehistoric group of soapstone carvings.

I invite all my Members to visit Sam's Place for a relaxing spot of tea, following your adventurous tours through this rather historic region of our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Wilmore Coole was born in Newman's Cove on November 15, 1935, and just recently celebrated his 87th birthday. Born in a two-story house where the current fire department and community hall stands, he has spent his whole life in Newman's Cove, Bonavista Bay, where he gave years of service to his community.

Wilmore worked on Skipper John Blackmore's cargo vessel, the *MV Newfoundlander*. But when home and back on land, he dedicated his efforts to the community's fire department and the Local Service District. Three years ago, Wilmore received his 25-year pin, acknowledging a quarter of a century serving the area's fire department and recently attended the Five Coves Fire Department ball on Saturday, March the 18, with his wife Cora.

Wilmore was also the point person in looking after Newman's Cove water system during this time, maintaining the system to assure that the residents had running water. This was no easy task as the system was an aging one and the community struggles even today with modernizing its infrastructure.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the volunteerism of Wilmore Coole of Newman's Cove in supporting his community and area.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, the contribution that RCMP officers make to rural Newfoundland is so valuable to our communities.

Derm Roul and his wife Stephanie now call Burin their home, having moved there in 2016 with their children, Nathan and Emma.

Corporal Derm Roul became involved immediately in a soccer program for youth over three and under-17 age groups. Under Derm's leadership and guidance as president of the Burin Minor Soccer Association program, participation of the youth skyrocketed and the club is now the largest on the Burin Peninsula. Derm and his competent executive are dedicated to providing players the ability to acquire necessary skills and talents that have a significant impact on their development.

Growing up in Lawn on the Burin Peninsula, a former member of the Lawn Shamrocks, Derm enjoys participating and sharing his great skill and passion for the game.

Derm's community engagement goes beyond the field of play, as he is also involved in organizing the annual RCMP charitable hockey game where \$40,000 has been raised for the Burin Peninsula Health Care Foundation to aid in the purchase of medical equipment.

Thank you to Corporal Derm Roul for keeping our communities safe and our children engaged.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today upon the conclusion of last week's National Volunteer Week. A week that is set aside to celebrate and thank people all around the world who dedicate their precious time and efforts to voluntary service.

Volunteering Weaves Us Together was this year's theme. There is a common thread in all volunteers, and I take great pleasure in highlighting youth in my district. Like Maggie, a young girl from Hillview, who, on

Earth Day, took a bag and collected garbage along the side of the road because it was fun. The students who go to the seniors' homes and sing because it makes them smile. And Kayla from Hickman's Harbour who chose to collect non-perishables at Halloween instead of candy and donated it to the local food bank.

To the parents, families and friends who all volunteered during the Easter break for hockey tournaments, ice shows, volleyball games, dance competitions, peeling of vegetables for seal suppers and making pancake batter for community breakfasts, I thank you. It's the small gestures that have the biggest impact. Join me in thanking all volunteers, not just for a week, but daily. This thread continues to grow and it is vital in weaving our communities together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, it's not every day that one can celebrate 25 years of service to municipal politics, but today I'm happy to stand in this hon. House to recognize exactly that.

This past December, Councillor Marion McCarthy, with the Town of Flatrock, celebrated 25 years of service to the residents of her hometown.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: An outstanding community volunteer, Marion has contributed greatly to the growth and success that the town has witnessed over her municipal career. Always there to help organize and to get the job done, Marion is a team player who never looks for recognition on a personal level, always seeing the greater good for her town.

In addition to her municipal service, the youth throughout Flatrock and the neighbouring towns certainly know Marion well, as she has organized and managed the Flatrock and area soccer group for the past 25 years and is affectionately known as the soccer lady.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this 50th General Assembly to join me in congratulating Marion McCarthy of Flatrock for her 25 years of municipal service, and thank her for the level of volunteerism she has shown for the benefit of others.

Thank you, my friend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, this is National Tourism Week –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: – which is an opportunity for all of us to celebrate Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism operators and the incredible benefits that the tourism industry brings to our communities and our province.

Tourism operators are helping us to tell our stories to visitors from all over the world. They help build and enhance experiences and support cultural and recreation assets in our communities throughout the province, which also improves the quality of life for our residents.

I would like to thank Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and our destination management organizations for their incredible work to support tourism efforts throughout our province. Their

collective work has resulted in an unmatched pride of place, and a celebration of what Newfoundland and Labrador is, and who we are as people.

In December, we joined the industry to launch Vision 2026, a plan to transition the tourism industry from the effects of the pandemic and transform us into a thriving tourism destination. It will take work, but we are willing to get there. The potential of this industry is endless, and we have proven that if we work together to advance our collective goals, we can achieve great things.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking the tourism operators and partners throughout the province and wish them a wonderful Tourism Week.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We in the Official Opposition want to take this opportunity to recognize National Tourism Week and its theme: Canada: Powered by Tourism. Tourism, indeed, is an economic generator in this province, employing thousands of individuals within the industry. We, like all of Canada, have a story to tell about our rich history, culture and experiences to tourists around the globe.

We recognize Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and our destination management organizations who work tirelessly to support and grow our tourism industry in the province. The potential of our tourism industry is endless indeed, but tourists need affordable and available access to our province so we can showcase our vast

potential and pristine beauty to all those who wish to come and experience it.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The New Democratic caucus also recognizes the dedicated work of operators who bring people from all corners of this world to Newfoundland and Labrador.

I remind this government that they also have a role to play. Tourists expect transportation infrastructure to access the pristine towns. They expect a minimum that there's clean water when they reach their destination. Increased funding to municipalities is so important. That is also a big part of our tourism infrastructure, so I ask the province to make sure that the municipalities are well funded for the tourists.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

G. BYRNE: There is absolutely no doubt that a new chapter is being written in our province's storied history and, Speaker, all of us are helping to write it. For decades, we have been facing down an almost insurmountable challenge. For decades, our population has been shrinking due to a demographic reality that has been difficult to correct.

Well, Speaker, when Newfoundlanders and Labradorians see a challenge, one that allows their generosity, their progressiveness and their hard-working attitude to shine through, a solution will be found. And, Speaker, the solution has been found.

I am pleased to report to the House that, for the last seven consecutive quarters, Statistics Canada is reporting the population of our neighborhoods has grown by over 12,000 people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: For the first time in 50 years, enrolment of children in our schools is increasing, not shrinking. This coming fall will see more children in schools for the second consecutive year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: Our internationally recognized Ukrainian Family Support efforts certainly support this result, but it's not the only driver.

Newfoundland and Labrador is actively welcoming talented refugees and asylum-seekers from South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and anywhere where systemic persecution exists. We are attracting new communities to call this their home. Today, Newfoundland and Labrador is home to a vibrant Muslim community at over 7,500 strong and growing. These are our doctors, our educators, our entrepreneurs, our front-line workers. These are the people who now are embedded in the story of our future.

As testament to this success, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the House that we have achieved a doubling of our yearly immigration spaces from 1,500 to 3,050 people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: This, along with their families, represents a capacity of 6,700 newcomers being able to be nominated annually.

Newfoundland and Labrador is writing a brand new chapter. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier, all Members of this House and all who support newcomers for helping us to hold that pen and add to this story.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to recognize the incredible contributions that immigrants make to our beautiful province. The diversity that is brought here through immigration programs enriches our own cultural identities and gives us hope in building a better future.

The hard work of groups, like the Association for New Canadians, is certainly making a difference to people from all over the world that want to call this place home. We do indeed welcome them with open arms.

Speaker, the minister sure knows how to paint that picture. Platitudes of rising to the challenge are empty words that don't do the situation real justice. The real story being written here is one of barriers and struggles created by a disconnected government. Sure, you can get them here. But what then?

Issues like a lack of affordable housing, barriers to professional licensing, health care access and public transportation hit newcomers even harder than most. Just ask one of the thousands that cannot work in their chosen field and have been in

temporary housing far longer than anyone has expected.

Speaker, it's not good enough just to get people here; they want to stay here. Currently, our province has a 46.2 per cent retention rate after five years; more than half of newcomers leave for another province. Statistics Canada also reports that Newfoundland and Labrador saw fewer than 4,000 immigrants between 2016 and 2021, less than any other province in our country.

Though we welcome the increase of enrolment of our schools, we must also recognize that many of these schools are in a state of disrepair, overcrowded and understaffed. This is the result of this government.

Speaker, I agree a story is being written here and it could indeed be a beautiful one, but not if government fails to provide the supports, infrastructure and duty of care that the wonderful people of this world want to call this place home.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, and the NDP caucus certainly join him in welcoming our newcomers.

However, if government is only focusing on numbers and ignoring the supports, then it is failing newcomers and doing them a disservice. Many of these newcomers speak of the lack of available housing or about how our schools don't have the resources required to support their children and about how many of them can't find daycare and the lack of public transit.

I remind the minister that this is the next chapter that government needs to be writing. Eight quarters ago, the world was emerging from the pandemic and supporting of these newcomers is where this government is failing and needs to do better.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's been almost a month since the standoff in the crab fishery began and harvesters and plant workers are wondering where the Premier is. He has not taken the time to meet face to face with the FFAW and has skirted questions here in this House.

Why has the Premier turned his back on our billion-dollar crab fishery?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'm sure the president of the FFAW will tell you, I've met with them by the phone a couple of weeks ago. I've met with the processors.

Again, what the Member opposite refuses to acknowledge is this is a market force. There are market forces at play, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what instrument he thinks is available to my government or any other government to force the market. Is he suggesting that we subsidize the plant workers? Is he suggesting that we subsidize

the processors? Is he suggesting that we subsidize the fish harvesters, Mr. Speaker? I'm left baffled and confused, but I appreciate the symbolism of the question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I think what we're asking is for the Premier to sit down and meet with these people. You've got to start talking to them. There's no good having a phone conversation. You've got to meet face to face, sit down and talk the issues out, then you may get a solution. Skirting issues will not solve this problem, Mr. Speaker, and it's too important of an issue for the people of the province to ignore but we see it on the government side.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, in stark contrast, the Premier is quick to roll out the red carpet for John Risley and the green hydrogen in Stephenville but can't find an hour to meet with harvesters and plant workers who are concerned about their livelihood.

Why is the lifeblood of rural Newfoundland not as important, Mr. Speaker?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm happy to report, on behalf of the Premier, on behalf of the province, I meet with the FFAW very regularly. As a matter of fact, about an hour ago I was on phone with Greg Pretty, his own self and he said if you get a question, be certain to tell them in the House that you and I have open conversations all the time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAGG: Plus, on top of that, Mr. Speaker, anybody that's ever questioned me or called our office, I've returned their phone call – any fisherperson, any plant worker, anybody in this province. So I put it out there if anybody wants me to have a conversation with them, I'm more than open to it at any time, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to clarify; I never questioned the minister. I know the minister stood in front of that crowd and I commend him for doing that.

We have a Premier – we have one Premier. He's our Premier. He's actually my Premier, too, and we all want him to meet with these individuals and sort this problem out. Not the minister, the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, government was also quick to work with oil industry partners to offer subsidies and royalty changes to kick-start the Terra Nova Project, which we all applaud. Speaker, as long as no one is talking, the impasse will continue.

Will the Premier finally convene a meeting of both parties to try to get that crab fishery going? Not the minister, the Premier.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to stand here in my place and correct the record. I have met with both parties, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Well, obviously, it was a phone call. He already told us it was a phone call; that's not a meeting and we still have the problem here today. So, Premier, you need to pick it up.

Speaker, the Liberal government has repeatedly slashed the operating grant to Memorial University since they took office.

With more cuts planned over the next five years, why does the Premier blame the university for tuition doubling when the Liberal government has been cutting ever since they came to office?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me first address MUN as an important cornerstone of our province, Mr. Speaker. We all recognize the contributions that MUN play from an economic perspective, from a social perspective, in helping craft the future narrative, a sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have taken a different approach than the Member opposite, who has weaponized and demonized the reputation of this institution, in this very House, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful. We have taken a different approach. We've met with the different stakeholders to ensure that there is alignment now that there is a new administration to chart a course forward together to reinvigorate and protect and grow this important institution and the reputation it has in Newfoundland and Labrador and beyond.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I don't need lectures from the Premier or anyone opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: It's about trying to take credit on the other side. They created instability. Now he wants us to pat him on the back because he believes there is instability and he's going to save the day. You created this problem, Premier. Don't lecture me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the Premier wants to blame the university for tuition doubling and the current chaos at the university, but he should be looking in the mirror. The Liberal government set the stage for the repeated budget cuts and now students are left to deal with the consequences.

Will the Premier admit the chaos at the university has occurred on his watch?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me once again address how important this institution is, the people who work there, the people who attend there, who are in the audience, in the gallery today. Mr. Speaker, this is an incredibly important institution.

What we have seen from the Member opposite is continued weaponizing this process, continued to demonize the university. Mr. Speaker, time and time again, he stood in Question Period and questioned the university and the contributions it makes to Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have taken a different approach – we have taken a different approach. We want to make sure now that there is, coming from

this time of disruption, the opportunity to capitalize, to work with the different stakeholders to ensure that there is an alignment towards protecting and growing the reputation of this important institution within Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier, once again, he's deflecting from the issue. He's trying to point the finger at me. Take responsibility – take responsibility. You're the government. We have to hold government to account and we'll keep doing that. You're the government. Take responsibility, Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, we called for the Auditor General to open the books at Memorial but jacking up tuition before the AG finished, in her review, is the wrong approach.

Why is the Premier so eager to slash the university's budget and jack up tuition before the AG reviewed the university?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'd like to join with the Premier in expressing my support for Memorial as an institution, having taught there in an extramural capacity for nearly 20 years. I value it and the residents and the trainees we've had. It's a gem and it's well recognized, not just in this province.

I think it's worth pointing out that Memorial has its own board of governance. It has its

own structure and is autonomous. We responded to MUN's decision to raise tuition by taking the offset money and moving it over to assist those students who would properly be entitled to go to Memorial University. We will continue to support those students, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, we need action, not words. I met with the previous president of MUN. They were not notified of any tuition cuts until the day the budget was announced. That's not consultation in my world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the CBC reported in November that new registration to the university had dropped almost 20 per cent after tuition spiked on the backs of students. The reason tuition was made affordable at the university was to attract people to live in the province and hopefully make it their home.

Will the Premier admit that the massive decline to student enrolment is due to the Liberal government tuition increase?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As usual, there's a little bit more nuance to the Member opposite's statement. Universities across Canada have seen domestic enrolment, particularly at the undergraduate level, fall. There has been a small rise in postgraduate level of enrolment. This is not unique to Memorial. We are happy to work with Memorial to help them.

Once they increased their tuition fees, however, we moved the money that went to the offset for Memorial, to students, where it currently resides. We're happy – and I met with MUNSU and I've met with MUN within the last two weeks – to talk to them about how things may need to change in the future to help stabilize the situation. I'm happy to continue those discussions, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

A program designed to help mothers with infants to put food on the table is not reaching those that need it. Despite a food insecurity and a cost-of-living crisis in our province, the minister is allowing 50 per cent of money to go unused.

Why is the minister allowing pregnant mothers and families with infants to go without help?

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

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Over the past two budgets, we've increased the supplement for young mothers to help them through maternity and for the first year of the child's birth. We are promoting that program far and wide.

We're keeping the money in the budget. We're looking at other options to make sure we can get the dollars that are unspent into the hands of those mothers. We are working on that as we speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: It would be nice to know the details on what they're doing and what their plan is to get the money into those families with needs.

Speaker, a question. The threshold for the program is \$25,726 net family income. With grocery bills climbing and the cost of living soaring, which we would all agree, does the minister really believe this is a realistic threshold?

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

J. ABBOTT: Again, Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to respond.

As I mentioned in the previous question, they're the types of things that we are looking at. All options are – quote, unquote – on the table to make sure we can allocate those dollars that have been budgeted by the Minister of Finance and through the tax expenditure side of her budget to reach the new mothers and new infants as quickly as possible, and expanding the program where it makes sense to do within our current budget allocation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, the threshold for the Prenatal Infant Nutrition Supplement is too low for a family with two minimum wage earners. I think we probably would all agree with that. It doesn't take into account the fact that a parent often chooses to stay home with their child.

Will the minister give us a firm timeline as to when the appropriate funds will be put into those families that need resources ASAP?

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

J. ABBOTT: Again, Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Certainly, one the key social determinants of health is to support young mothers, young infants to have a healthy beginning. That is the whole purpose of this supplement.

Where we can make improvements in that program, we have, and we will continue to do so. In terms of a definite time frame in terms of how we can make those changes, we're working on them as quickly as possible, but I would like to see that over the next number of months for sure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, once again, we see that women are unequally bearing the brunt of a poorly administered government program.

Speaker, all provinces and the federal government have committed to end gender-based violence within 10 years; however, this province still does not have a violence prevention plan.

I ask the minister: Without a plan how will we end gender-based violence in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member, of course, for the question. Again, the recognition on also putting the light on these very important topics.

You're right. On November 9 the federal government did announce a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, which

means that significant funding support will roll out to every province and territory to help organizations in these jurisdictions make a tailor-made approach to what we can do to enhance violence prevention.

I'm happy to say that the team in my office, in the Office of Women and Gender Equality just this past month, have met with 30 organizations across Newfoundland and Labrador to better collaborate on ways that we can enhance and prevent gender-based violence here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of course, we're happy to work with our community stakeholders as well as our federal partners.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, clearly there is no commitment to have a violence prevention plan.

During the recent Mass Casualty Commission inquiry in Nova Scotia, a coalition of women's groups recommended that school-aged children learn about safe and healthy relationships. The current school system does not focus on intimate partner violence.

When will this recommendation be implemented in our school system?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Member opposite raises a really important question. Within the K-to-6 system, there is a program. We have also introduced as a pilot a program about

healthy relationships and awareness. It's currently, I believe – and I'll confirm the number – in 36 schools, with the expectation that this will double if not spread to the remaining schools over the course of the coming academic years.

It's a subject we take seriously. The junior high school curriculum and senior high school curriculum are both under review and these elements will be incorporated into that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, today the family and friends of Chantel John are speaking out about another delay in the first-degree murder trial. I remind the Minister of Justice that justice delayed is justice denied.

Why is the minister permitting an administrative delay at Legal Aid to deny justice?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I certainly understand that people are upset and I express my condolences to the families and individuals that are involved in this situation. But I do want to correct the question. It's not an administrative delay. The fact of the matter is the matter is moving through the court and is now in the Court of Appeal.

We do have to respect the victim's rights as well as the accused's rights in all situations. There is a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in this country. There is a trial procedure that's set out in the *Criminal Code* that's a

federal jurisdiction and we have to respect that.

Sometimes these things take a while to get through the system but, of course, we do have to respect the judiciary and respect the legal process. The Court of Appeal is part of that process. I'm sure that decision will be coming forthwith and the matter can proceed, as it should, through the rules that are set by the federal government.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Three weeks ago, Minister, there were 1,236 Ukrainian newcomers living in temporary accommodations.

How many have found permanent housing since then? What is the current number of Ukrainians still living in hotels?

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

G. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to speak publicly and in this House about our very welcomed friends and neighbours from Ukraine who are very much appreciative of the assistance the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, have provided them.

One of the things that I have heard repeatedly is that there is a notion that there are Ukrainians staying very long term in temporary accommodations after they arrive. That is not the case. I've assured the hon. Member that on several occasions.

The average stay for temporary accommodations by a Ukrainian or a Ukrainian family is now less than 50 days. We now have approximately 1,000 people who are living in temporary

accommodations, but I would also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we have, on average, a Ukrainian family arriving in our province each and every day. The people that arrived here back over a year ago are not the same ones in temporary accommodations. There's a brand new group of people.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I'll ask the question again: What is the current number of people living in temporary accommodations and how many have found permanent housing?

Thank you.

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

G. BYRNE: So, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat what I just said, which is there are approximately 1,000 people living in temporary accommodations. We have 2,800 Ukrainians that are here. I think you can do the math.

So with that said, Mr. Speaker, without being flippant about it, we have a group of people who their prior housing arrangement was that an artillery shell went through their apartment building. So they came to Newfoundland and Labrador seeking greater comfort and security. We are offering them that. It does require, upon transition, for them to receive temporary accommodations.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, this government is working with the Association for New Canadians to do just that. The rate of moving into market housing has been exceptional and we're going to

continue on with those efforts while we welcome more Ukrainians to our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I only asked the number, and I can assure you that the Opposition is not being flippant on this subject.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Speaker, during Estimates, the minister said – and I quote – Ukrainians are adding to our health care system. How many medical professionals from the Ukraine are now licensed to practise in our province?

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

G. BYRNE: So, Mr. Speaker, the system of licensure for doctors and for registered nurses, of course, is very different in the Ukraine than it is in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Canada and many within our licensing system. We are working directly with all Ukrainians to get their credentials recognized. That is a process.

One of the things that I think the hon. Member would like to add to his own point of view was that we should never, ever, ever encourage someone who may not necessarily meet the licensing standard right now to work in our health care system. But, Mr. Speaker, our health care system is very vast and very broad. We have not only people who are working in professional medical situations, but we have personal care attendants, we have those who are working in hospitals in various capacities, we have a number of different people but, most importantly, we're working to get the licences recognized.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I asked the question because it was a quote from Estimates.

Speaker, newcomers to our province are being welcomed to a housing crisis, a cost-of-living crisis and a health care system that is being pushed to the limit. If we want them to stay here and make their future here, which is what we want, they need assurances that their basic needs will be met.

I ask the minister: How many Ukrainian newcomers currently have a family doctor?

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

G. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I recognize, I think everybody recognizes, that the Opposition is asking us to put our Ukrainian efforts on pause. They would say that unless it's perfect, we should not engage. We should put a pause button on this initiative. That is not the right answer.

Mr. Speaker, we are rising above. We are doing things and we are being recognized internationally for our efforts in Newfoundland and Labrador. If the objective here is to let the perfect get in the way of the good, well, Mr. Speaker, we're doing pretty damn good.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

When speaking about the province being featured in *Peter Pan*, the minister talked about the opportunities it presents for the province, and I agree.

I ask the minister: Without direct flights to this province from Europe, New York and other international hubs, how can our tourism industry take advantage of this opportunity?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, this government has put more efforts into the air access initiative, I think, over the last three years than any other government in history. I think there are many people who would actually support that statement.

Mr. Speaker, just a week and a half ago, along with the airport authorities from St. John's, Gander and Deer Lake, we were in Montreal to meet with Air Canada. We expressed to them the need for that flight back to Europe.

I know my colleague, right here, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology last week was at a conference where he heard the same thing and brought that back. We will continue those conversations with Air Canada and any other airline who want to actually come to Newfoundland and Labrador and offer that direct flight. Mr. Speaker, hopefully there will be another question so I can continue my answer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: I commend the minister for his answer. It was an actual answer. I appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Minister, with that being said, this is not a softball, but it's an opportunity for you to stand and speak about it again.

People want to visit our province but face expensive and limited flight options. Without affordable options to get here, will tourists chose to go elsewhere? What is your plan to get tourists in our province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member and it's not a softball question; it's a good question. Mr. Speaker, we have to look at every opportunity to find ways to work with airlines, work with our DMOs, work with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador to find incentives for the airlines to actually come to Newfoundland and Labrador. We see some of this happening now. Deer Lake Regional Airport Authority recently entered into a partnership with Air Canada and Go Western where they're offering shoulder season packages.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at our tourism industry in our province – and this was part of the conversation we had with Air Canada as well – it's really about building our shoulder seasons, our spring and our fall. That's when they have capacity and we have capacity. We look forward to working with airlines like Air Canada and others.

Mr. Speaker, hopefully there's another question because I have more to my answer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: See, that's collaboration. I'm going to give him another question.

Minister, it's been four years since there was a direct flight to this province from Europe and beyond. The minister recently met with Air Canada.

Can we expect direct flights back to Europe?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Again, Mr. Speaker, a good question.

Mr. Speaker, our conversation with Air Canada was quite frank and so were their comments back to us and back to St. John's regional airport, because it is St. John's, actually, that is really the airport that's in the conversation here. We are certainly on Air Canada's – pardon the pun – radar when it comes to a direct flight to Europe. They are still adding back equipment that they actually retired during the pandemic. There are some lag times actually being experienced by some of the new aircraft coming into the system.

I want to also add, Mr. Speaker, just recently we saw an announcement on an agreement between PAL and Air Canada that actually offers up some of Air Canada's benefits to PAL. It also sees PAL now finishing some legs of Air Canada flights. You can book an Air Canada flight now and your final leg may be on a PAL aircraft. We're looking forward to more of that co-operation as well, because PAL also creates a very big advantage for us in the (inaudible).

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, in a recent media interview, the Premier expressed deep concern over the instability and chaotic situation at Memorial University, yet his government continues to cut MUN's budget – \$68 million in 2021 and millions more this year.

Does the Premier understand that the instability at MUN is a chaotic situation of his government's own making and directly caused by its decision to cut MUN's funding?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, once again, I'll reiterate how important MUN is as an institution to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with the stakeholders. The governance structure is – as I'm sure the Member opposite realizes we don't control the finances specifically at MUN. I had a good meeting with the president of MUNSU last week. We're willing to work with them, MUNFA and the Board of Regents to ensure that from a funding perspective instability is not created on behalf of government.

As I think we can all recognize, it is an unstable situation right now. We want to create stability so that this institution can grow, foster and create a world-renowned – grow on its world-renowned reputation on behalf of all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, when government cuts funding to Memorial, it's actually cutting funding to students. It's as simple as that. Students face skyrocketing tuition, a lack of affordable housing and a food bank so highly in demand that it had to close.

Since 2017, students at Memorial had to pay a \$500 campus renewal fee, which the university was forced to institute to address crumbling infrastructure after years of government neglect. By the way, in that same year, that government cut another \$9 million from MUN's operating grant.

So I ask the Premier: How does he justify balancing his government's provincial budget on the backs of our students?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure I can take credit, what happened in 2009, was it, that he said. Regardless, Mr. Speaker, we are where we are right now. We'll be working with stakeholders to ensure that there is stability back at the institution.

It's an important institution. We contribute a large amount of money to it. We are accountable to the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. We have to ensure that it is being used appropriately; I think we can all recognize that. But above everything else and despite the Members opposite from both parties slamming this institution, we need to make sure that the reputation of the institution is above all of us. We need to make sure it's protected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Labradorians look forward to having a full MUN campus in the Big Land, but turmoil brought by this government's thoughtlessness jeopardizes the meaningful work here. Labradorians still pay through the nose to move to the Island for education.

Will this minister commit to re-examining MUN's building footprint policy so Labradorians can access post-secondary education closer to home in the Big Land?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As I said in a previous answer, I met with MUNFA, MUNSU, the chair of the Board of Regents, the chancellor and the interim president. We have committed to work on any obstacles that prevent Labradorians and Newfoundlanders from accessing Memorial University, or indeed CNA or any of our post-secondary institutions. Those conversations have started and I'm committed to continue them.

So the short answer to his question might be, actually, yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Speaker, the east-west arterial was designed over 20 years ago with a goal of effectively moving high volumes of traffic to the east end of St. John's from the west end of the city, as well as from Mount Pearl, the Goulds and the communities along the Southern Shore. To date, this highway is still not complete, that being the Phase 3 of the Team Gushue Highway from Topsail Road to the Robert E. Howlett highway.

In addition to the inefficiencies this causes for the movement of traffic, the current set-up sees high volumes of traffic spilling onto residential streets in Mount Pearl, creating congestion and safety concerns.

I ask the minister: Can he provide an update to this hon. House as it relates to the completion of this important piece of provincial infrastructure?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to recognize that this government is investing the most ever in roads and infrastructure in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: With respect to the specific question, Mr. Speaker, all I will do is say this: Stay tuned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: I can't wait to see you and Seamus with your little white hard hats on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Speaker, for years now I have been asking the government to implement a system similar to budget Estimates that Members of the House of Assembly can examine and question officials of the province's agencies, boards and commissions as to how they are spending taxpayers' money.

Two budgets ago, the Minister of Finance announced that this would be done, but here we are two years later and still no process in place. We'll spend time in this House questioning the Minister of Health on travel, office supplies and photocopying expenses, and then we will pass right over billions of dollars being transferred to the health authorities no questions asked. There is something deeply flawed about this process.

I ask the minister: When can we expect her to implement the system of oversight by this House of Assembly that she publicly committed to?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

This is an important question and one that I'm supportive of having agencies, boards and commissions be examined by this House of Assembly. I have said that in this House previously, Speaker. I'm supportive of that. In fact, we've put a new accountability framework within all of government to ensure that we have an accountability framework for agencies, boards and commissions.

To his question specifically, that is a question to the House Management Commission as to how we would be able to implement that in the House of Assembly. It is not a question to the Minister of Finance because, of course, it is a House question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

B. WARR: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I stand on a point of order. The point of order, really, was in debate this morning.

In the budget debate, the Member for Torngat Mountains was speaking of suicides in Labrador. She mentioned the fact that because it doesn't really impact certain people, they really, really don't care. That was the statement that she made, Mr. Speaker.

I stand in my place today to say I care about you and I care about your people, the people of your district. I care about all of you people and the people in your district. I care about the 22 people on this side and the

people in their district. I was taken back by the comment, Mr. Speaker, and I don't normally – I listen in this House of Assembly; I pride myself on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. WARR: I took exception to it. I was a former police officer and to say that people are not affected or you don't care about – I wasn't impacted from a family point, but I was impacted by things that I had to witness in my lifetime, my career as a police officer.

I really think that we, as a government, have done considerable work when it comes to suicide prevention. Mr. Speaker, if you'll permit me, I have 14 pages that I will table here today of things that we've done as a government. I'm not saying that we do everything right, Mr. Speaker, but we've come a long way.

I see the Member over there waving her papers at me, and, listen, you're welcome to have a conversation with me anytime because I will let you know how I feel. You let us know how you felt this morning. I just felt it was wrong in what you were portraying that we didn't care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. WARR: I'm here to tell you that I do care. I'm telling you that I do care.

Mr. Speaker, if you'll let me just quote a former minister of Health and Community Services. "We've made great strides in improving the quality and availability of mental health and addiction services over the past several years, but we recognize there is still work to do. We remain committed to working with communities to improve awareness of mental health concerns, reduce stigma for seeking help, and provide tools and supports needed to help people live healthy and well, thereby helping preventing deaths by suicide."

Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for Labrador Affairs spoke and said: “Labrador, in general, and the Indigenous communities of Labrador, in particular, have higher than average rates of suicide. Those lost lives, often, young individuals, are tragedies beyond the capacity of words to express. I’m hopeful about this plan, because its teams, including an Indigenous team, chaired by former Grand Chief of Innu Nation, Anastasia Qupee, have provided the wisdom for its actions. The actions of the plan must help end this loss of all too valuable lives.”

Mr. Speaker, quoted by Anastasia Qupee, chair of the Indigenous Health Team, Towards Recovery, she says: “Suicide is a leading cause of death in Innu communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet, despite the many tragedies our Peoples face when loved ones are lost to suicide, we still have hope.” I have hope, too.

“Our Path to Resilience is an action plan rooted in hope and focused on connections to people, land and culture. It reflects the wisdom of our communities and our paths to healing.”

Mr. Speaker, I was going to get up this morning when the actual statement was made and I thought it wasn’t the right time. In doing so, I picked the first opportunity to get up to make my statements, Speaker, under section 49 of the *Standing Orders*. I’d certainly welcome to hear from the hon. Member if she should so address the House, or if she doesn’t want to, Mr. Speaker, I’d be glad to meet with her later.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member for his kind words. It’s good to hear that he cares.

My statements this morning on the budget was about the fact that in Nunatsiavut in Northern Labrador, the Inuit women have a 31.5 per cent higher rate of suicide than on the Island. In the reports that we’ve seen, 20 per cent higher in Labrador, but on the North Coast, we have a significantly higher rate of suicide. What it is, is when you look at all the issues that’s been brought forward by the Inuit and by the Innu, it is really about what’s at the root of suicide.

For our women, we also have Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Why do we have an acronym for that? Why did we have to have a huge inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada? It was because of inequity. Inequity where women actually didn’t have access to safe and adequate housing; did not have adequate ability to heat their homes and protect their children and actually feed their children – food insecurity, housing.

I spoke earlier of what contributes to suicide. The Federal Housing Advocate actually came to my district. You know what she said? She has nightmares.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair, not the audience.

L. EVANS: So caring is one thing. I’ll stick to the topic and I’ll stick to what he said. Caring is one thing, but caring without action, without helping – in my district, since I was elected in 2019, there’s been very little to do with housing; there’s been very little food security. This government took off the freight boat from the Island and we look at the prices now. The prices in the stores, people can’t afford to feed their children.

We look at electricity. We are punished for being remote. We are punished because we rely on diesel. So what ends up happening is to prevent us from using electric heat in our houses, basically, the rate goes up to 19 cents a kilowatt hour.

I've actually listened to both sides of the House talk about the price of electricity because of Muskrat Falls is going to go up to what, 15, 16 cents kilowatt hour and everybody was outraged. How are we going to heat our houses? People are going to be frozen out of their homes. We actually cannot heat our houses with electricity in Northern Labrador. Do you know something? The thing about it is that is not right and so I talked to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, they said: Oh, well, you know, we want them to use alternate sources such as like hauling wood and heating their houses with stove oil, furnace oil.

But you want to know something? We can't afford the stove oil. A senior does not have the ability – I talked this morning. You want to talk about caring. If you care, you have an obligation to help. You are elected to this House of Assembly to help.

Women and gender equality – you have 31.5 per cent higher rate of women in my district of Nunatsiavut, Northern Labrador is committing suicide than in the province. They are not secure. We talk about housing. We talk about corrections, right?

The thing about it is intergenerational trauma is occurring because no one is helping us with our food security. This government did not consult with Nunatsiavut or the Innu, especially with Nunatsiavut, about taking off that freight boat which was the infringement of their land claims agreement. Anything to do with transportation but, oh, they came to the communities after the fact and, basically, told them how the system was going to run. That is not consultation.

You look at the price of gasoline. You want to haul your wood. Women are actually suffering the most from the high cost of fuel and in actual fact –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: – suicide is a huge issue. So if you care, help me –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Do you want to finish up your remarks pertaining to the point of order?

L. EVANS: Can I stand up again now? I can go all day.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I can go all day about disenfranchisement. I can go all day about really what is at the root of suicide. So I do understand that we're all human beings and we do care. But, at the end of the day, if you're elected as an MHA to represent your district and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, you also have to help the most vulnerable. In my district, we have the most vulnerable.

Housing – one of the biggest issues with housing is mould. Mould is a huge thing because people can't properly heat their houses. A big problem that contributes to children in care is the intergenerational trauma and a lot of people actually fall into addictions, not because they're susceptible to addictions, but really, Minister, it's because the world that they're born into in this day and age.

In my district, our children are still vulnerable to intergenerational trauma. Because in actual fact, I've been affected, me, myself. I went to university, I've got a good-paying job, I have not fallen into addictions, but even I have suffered from intergenerational trauma. The thing about it is we didn't recognize it. We did not recognize the harm from the residential schools. We did not know because no one talked about it.

But I have to tell you it shows in the numbers. I talk about acronyms. Truth and Reconciliation, Missing and Murdered

Indigenous Women and Girls, I do not say acronyms. There's a National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy to try and actually help the Inuit from killing themselves because, at the end of the day, are we going to get help from the provincial government?

Do you know something? The suicide issues that we have in Northern Labrador do not have to do with psychosis. The big announcement in the budget is oh, you're going to have the nurses for psychosis. Do you want to know something? In actual fact, if you want to stop the suicides in Northern Labrador, help address the socio-economic issues and the marginalization that my people have faced for years and decades. In actual fact, that is the only way we can stop intergenerational trauma. That's the only way we can get decreases in suicide so that the women in Nunatsiavut are not killing themselves 31.5 per cent more the women on the Island.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

B. WARR: Thank you, Speaker.

I want the Member to be quite clear, I got up and I spoke to the statement. I spoke to the statement and then I referred to things that we've done as a government. I spoke to the statement and I clearly hope you understand that I care.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: I'll take some time to review the audio from this morning, I know it's a very important topic to everyone and I'll report back to the House at a later date.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

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 closure of the Canning Bridge in Marystown has had a devastating impact on the residents, fire and emergency services and the local economy.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure was well aware of the poor condition of the bridge, most recently documented in the bridge inspection report completed in January 2020, which confirmed the Canning Bridge was in poor condition.

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 begin the process of replacing the Canning Bridge.

While I know the process has been started, it's time for a plan to be rolled out because the people that signed this petition, Speaker, are all business owners. So that's who it's affecting. It's affecting everybody, but it's certainly affecting business owners. A lot of the businesses are on the north side, so a lot of people from the south side, Little Bay, Beau Bois area, and even coming down from Burin, would all go across the Canning Bridge and they'd be right in the middle of, let's say, the business district. There are a couple of malls. There are some fast food offerings and gas stations. There are grocery stores, all that kind of stuff, and even the town hall is right in the middle of it. So if you need to go and

get an application or anything from the town hall when it comes to your land or anything like that, then you certainly have been impacted by Canning Bridge as well.

So what the people of the town are asking – and I know that the last time I presented this petition was about communication and I have seen vast improvements in that. Like I said, there was probably a couple of incidents that I wasn't aware of that had happened. So like I said, going from the public engagement is where I went to on the last petition, but this one also came from the public engagement.

While I was at that public engagement, I sat and I listened. They had two public engagements. One was from the business owners and the other one was from the general public. When we had the one from the business owners, I was kind of taken back, I guess, for the amount of people that showed up. But for the ones that did show up, it certainly had a great impact on me and I really saw how it's impacting them.

We talk about trying to get a bus system in place and stuff like that, but we also don't want to drive out the likes of the Marystown taxi. We only have one taxi service in the town. It's a very vital service for low-income families, seniors and all that kind of stuff. But when you don't have the Canning Bridge there and you've got to go up around, now you're talking about going from a \$12 cab ride to a \$22 or \$23 or \$24 cab ride. So you're talking about almost double.

What I'm here to say today is that on behalf of the people that own businesses in Marystown, I just want to say let's share the plan, let's all be a part of the solution and let's move forward because there's nobody to blame, it's about working together to get this done.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, these are the reasons for the petition:

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador ended Memorial University's historic tuition freeze, resulting in a tuition increase of 150 per cent for domestic students. The cost of a degree is \$25,480 compared to the \$10,200 students paid during the years when the province froze tuition fees. The average undergraduate tuition for international students has increased by 97 per cent meaning that they will pay \$41,810 more for their Memorial University degree than they did before the cuts. This means that Memorial University will be the most expensive university in Atlantic Canada for international students.

Students are currently facing unprecedented threats to accessible and affordable education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Young people and families across this province and country are terrified for their futures as their ability to access even a marginally affordable post-secondary education is being ripped away. Low-income students and folks from marginalized backgrounds are watching as their opportunity to attend university disappears.

Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador believe that historic commitments to funding accessible and quality post-secondary education must be honoured and protected to ensure prosperity for future generations who wish to study in the province.

Investments in post-secondary education and affordable tuition have supported the growth and health of diverse communities across Newfoundland and Labrador for over 22 years. Cuts to post-secondary education

have jeopardized the growth of these communities.

Education is a public right that all students, both domestic and international, have the right to quality and accessible education in the province.

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 uphold the province's historic commitment to accessible education by committing to free education for all and eliminating all differential fees. Eliminate all student debt for existing provincial student loans. Sustain the College and Memorial University with healthy funding levels that secure good jobs and uplifts the post-secondary sector.

Speaker, I've spoken before in this House to whether we look upon education as a commodity or as a public good. If it's a public good then it's about investing in the future of this province, investing in the young people who are behind me in this gallery today.

On this petition is 222 signatures, and more will come, that are calling on this, calling upon how Memorial was set-up first with free tuition. There are jurisdictions that have free tuition. I think we need to be going there.

With that, Speaker, if the Premier recognizes that this is causing chaos and instability, now is the chance to fix it.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition I have presented a number of times already, but I will keep doing so until I start to see some action.

WHEREAS there are approximately 2,500 students currently enrolled in four elementary and one intermediate school in Paradise, with an additional 3,300 students enrolled in intermediate and high schools in neighbouring communities; and

WHEREAS with a population of approximately 24,000, Paradise is growing every year, with some school-aged groups doubling in size over a 10-year period; and

WHEREAS there is no high school in Paradise and hundreds of students are being transported to nearby communities to attend school; and

WHEREAS nearby intermediate and high schools are beyond capacity and seeing class sizes escalate to unmanageable levels;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge government to see the urgency for the need a high school in Paradise and plan a course of action for when this will be implemented.

Speaker, this was on the budget back in 2015. There was an intermediate school to be built; there was planning to start on the high school. When the current government came in, the high school was deferred indefinitely and the intermediate school was deferred two years and it has been built.

It has not changed the fact that the population in the area has increased and this is not just addressing a school in Paradise. This is addressing those who go to Holy Spirit High and those that go to Mount Pearl Senior High. Kids going to those schools have seen those class sizes escalate to unmanageable levels. Children in those schools can get better education and more access to extracurricular activities if we had a high school in Paradise.

This is not an issue that is going to go away; this is an issue that is with us. We see the numbers increase. The Minister of

Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, just minutes ago today, spoke about the increasing number of children in schools. That is not going to stop; that is not going to change.

We need a high school in Paradise and when you see it has been on the list for the last number of years, eight years for sure, with the English School District, as a priority to be built and when we see other schools come in and jump that line, essentially, it still doesn't change the fact that a high school in Paradise is needed and I want to see some action going forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Eastern Health repositioned one of the ambulances from the Trepassey region to the Cape Broyle Broyle area. This has left one ambulance in the Trepassey region. Residents of Trepassey and surrounding area are at least two hours away from the nearest hospital.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the safety and well-being of the residents of Trepassey have accessibility to an ambulance in a time of an emergency and meet national standard response times.

Speaker, I certainly done this petition numerous times and I want to continue to push it because it's a very serious issue that's in my district. The people of Trepassey, only last week, I am going to say, were without staff for the lone ambulance that they had for two to three days. I was speaking with the minister, now,

probably three weeks ago, maybe four, about a rapid response unit as well.

But, basically, we're looking to get that ambulance reinstated back in the area. I know that the minister, looking at the Health Accord, does plan on looking at the ambulance issue and certainly hope to see, whoever it's going to be, whether it be Eastern Health or not, that we reposition the ambulance back in Trepassey. Along with having no doctor in the area, when you get an ambulance that's down for three days or four days without staff to be able to provide that ambulance service, then it's a big, serious issue for the district.

Like I said, without a doctor being there and relying on nurse practitioners, it's something that the area definitely needs to get reinstated. You know, my concern was when the ambulance was down and I get a text saying there's no ambulance in the Trepassey area for three to four days, my request would be to have a public service announcement to say that the ambulance is not being staffed in the Trepassey area – not saying that they can't get an ambulance from St. Mary's or further down the shore in Cape Broyle if there's one there – to let the people know that it's not in the area.

We don't have the rapid response unit set up and I know that they don't want to come out and say there's no ambulance in the area. Well, there's no ambulance close. What if it's not in St. Mary's? What if they've got one other there and it's gone? It's a big issue for the people in the district. It's a big concern, whether they put them in a car and bring them to the hospital or start to go towards St. John's to get to a hospital, then that's all about time. I use the same example as I do. I mean, it could be somebody that's a stroke victim. Anybody could be using a chainsaw and cut a main artery. It's a very serious issue. It's something that the people of the District of Ferryland and certainly the people in Trepassey need to have reinstated.

It's a big, big concern and we need to have it looked at. We look at the geography of the area. We've got 200 kilometres to the nearest hospital and there are so many other factors that are in there.

I do thank you for your time. I'll certainly get a chance to present this petition again at a later date.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

With the release of the Atlantic Seal Science Task Team and the significance of the commercial harvest to the fishers and plant workers in the District of Bonavista, we feel that the seal population is far greater than the ecosystem can sustain. As a result, the large population of seals is certainly preventing the rebuilding of our valuable groundfish stock and negatively affecting the significant landed value of our commercial harvest.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to address the seal population by taking proactive measures on fulfilling our current provincial quota of seals and enhancing the markets of seal products within our province and other jurisdictions. Action is long overdue.

This is signed by a couple of harvesters in the District of Bonavista on this particular petition.

If we had a predator on land on the Island of Newfoundland, I think we would address it. Everyone would see it. We would address it. The Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills retweeted a video showing the massive amount of seal pups and seals on the ice on the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, up past the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

We've got a situation where the ecosystem is out of balance. DFO would say that our pelagic stock, which is capelin that's integral for growing our commercial product out there, is being eaten to the degree of one million metric tons of capelin alone per year. I would say that we've got to make sure that we've got more than one species out there, i.e., snow crab, that we know that fishers can go and harvest to a degree that they can have a meaningful income in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was said several times in this House that once you depend on one item or one species, you'll find that if something ever happens to that species, you're in a host of trouble. I would say we need diversification. I know that might sound like a buzzword, but if we know that we're losing our stock because of predation, we need to see an action plan. To date, we have no action plan.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition:

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, especially Routes 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.

Speaker, I have presented this petition on numerous occasions in this hon. House of Assembly. The last time I raised this petition in the House of Assembly was on March 14 with respect to the District of Harbour Main, in particular, the areas from Holyrood out to Upper Gullies. The roads there, as I've stated before, are atrocious. They're abysmal. They are deplorable. No one doubts that, no one questions that. But there are also other areas, Speaker, in the District of Harbour Main that I'd like to focus on in this particular petition and that is specifically with respect to Roaches Line.

Speaker, I've heard from residents in the area who are so disappointed that Roaches Line has not been considered for repairs this season again. They cite the reasons for their disappointment is the fact that Roaches Line is still travelled each day by major traffic to reach the TCH and go to St. John's, as well, tourists, travellers coming to our area from Brigus, Cupids, Clarke's Beach, et cetera.

These roads negatively affect the campground and cottage rentals as well. Roaches Line has not seen any extensive roadwork in over 40 years, Speaker, and there are gravel roads that are better.

Speaker, this is inadequate. This is substandard. Roaches Line is such an important route. It's being used as an alternate route for motorists, including tractor-trailers and construction equipment. Roaches Line is a shorter route to Bay

Roberts, and the areas mentioned, instead of taking the Veteran's Highway. Roaches Line is used by emergency vehicles; the Bay de Grave and Brigus fire departments, Clarke's Beach and Brigus ambulance services and the RCMP also use it as a shorter route to the Trans-Canada Highway.

We need to see government pay attention to this. The roads are badly in need of repair and repaving. We need action; we need a priority taken by government on this. We need the minister to immediately take action and to take the necessary steps to repair and repave this important roadway.

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 1.

SPEAKER: We're debating the subamendment of the budget.

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

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll just continue from where we left off this morning. As I mentioned, the budget had a significant focus on the social determinants of health, building on the Health Accord. The government is committed to the implementation of the Health Accord. There is no better evidence of that than the types of funding that we have put in place for different programs and services to support improved incomes for individuals, improving our education system, improving our

housing, improving community infrastructure, social and otherwise.

One of the things I just wanted to continue on, on the housing side of things, is we are investing \$16 million for rental assistance for families that can now rent in the private rental market, in addition to our own 5,500 Housing units. We're also providing \$10 million to homeowners to complete repairs, accessibility modifications, energy efficiency retrofits. So, again, individuals can stay in their own homes. That was certainly a recommendation coming out of the Health Accord.

What I would like just to mention as well is that we certainly want to focus on the individual. Through my department, the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and other departments and agencies, the Minister of Finance has allocated significant dollars in the budget to such things as increasing the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement by 5 per cent and increasing the Seniors' Benefit by 5 per cent, built on the 10 per cent increase of last year.

What that does, combined with the federal payments that individual seniors receive that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands reference this morning, is seniors 75 years of age and older now, in terms of Old Age Security payments, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, other tax credits and the like, will now receive over \$24,000 a year. Somebody who is between 65 and 74 will receive just over \$23,000 a year, a minimum income.

That's an important determinant of health, having income to afford the essentials of living, essentials of life, becomes very important. We will continue to address what we can, but I do agree with the Member that the federal government can and should step up and do more as well. I would certainly encourage that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: We know we're decreasing the price at the pump by reducing our provincial tax and that is significant for all commuters in the province. We continue with the supplement for the cost of furnace oil for those who heat with that fuel. We increased the basic income support rate by 5 per cent and that was funded again this year.

One of the things we're also doing is a basic income program for youth receiving residential services through the Youth Services program administered by my department. We've allocated \$3 million towards that initiative, which we will build on over the years to come. The point being, we want to make sure that youth who come out of our child protection system have a hand up, as any parent would do for youth, teenager or young adult leaving the home going into the world.

So we wanted to recognize our responsibility for those individuals in our care, that they, too, get that type of support that will allow them to at least afford an apartment, afford food and afford transportation as they get on with life.

In addition, we are providing funding towards an Employment Support Stability Pilot Project which will allow youth and others who are in an income support situation that they can now move into the workforce, have earnings from employment and be able to keep some of their income support payments so that they're not penalized.

We're seeing success with that program already, where we have 10 or more individuals who have now moved from income support and the income comes fully from employment.

I know the Members opposite yesterday had mentioned and questioned about that type of approach and that's something in principle that obviously we support. It's a program area that we need to expand to support young folks to make sure that they

get the support they need to attach themselves to the workforce and to education opportunities so that they have a better life going forward.

We've also extended and expanded the bus pass program under Metrobus in the St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise areas. That has proven to be quite successful and we've seen the numbers that avail of that program have increased significantly. I believe we're over 7,000 now that have those bus passes. So that allows them to move around from home to the community, avail of opportunities that otherwise they would not have been able to avail of. It's mentioned that we've also created more housing for individuals across the province and we have new construction and new affordable housing coming on stream over the next couple of years.

Within my own Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, one of the things we want to be able to do is support seniors and persons with disabilities to stay in their own communities, avail of the opportunities in their communities. So, for instance, we have our Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative that provides a small amount of funds to a broad number of organizations so that they can engage in social activities and get seniors from their homes, from their apartments, into community activities. We are spending \$200,000 on that.

We have our Community Transportation Program. What we're trying to do there is to encourage communities to mount a transportation program in their communities and surrounding communities to allow individuals to move again throughout the community using some of our start-up funds and use of volunteers and other supports that allow people to avail of – I'll use the word – urban transportation, i.e., the types of transportation we have here in the Northeast Avalon.

Last year, we provided \$100,000, for instance, to the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay to support their initiative to put a bus in place in that community. We have our Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Communities Program. So again, what we're trying to do there is encourage, at the community level, seniors' organizations working with youth organizations to transfer perspectives, skills, knowledge between the generations and that's being quite successful and we will build on that.

We have our Accessible Vehicle Funding program to support individuals that need their vehicles either modified to address a disability that an individual may have to allow them to use their own vehicle to be able to commute. We've got a budget allocation there of over \$300,000 to do that.

We have an Accessible Taxi Program. So a taxi company, no matter where they are in the province, if they wish to modify their taxi to support persons with disabilities to allow them to become paying passengers, we will provide supports for that, all within the context of a social determinant of health to support individuals where they are.

We have grants to youth organizations. Again, we want to make sure youth that are in the communities have availed of supportive opportunities so that they, too, can learn and contribute to their communities, to their families and within their peer groups. We're spending over \$450,000 to support those. The Community Youth Network comes to mind down in St. Lawrence and Grand Bank. We're very supportive of that organization. We're currently doing a review to see how we can expand and build on those types of programs to support youth as they become contributing members of our society.

We also are working through the Health Accord. I chair the Cabinet Committee on Seniors. For those who have read Chapter 8 of the Health Accord, there are a lot of

very specific findings, observations and recommendations for government to consider with the new Health Authority and others. We have a Cabinet Committee with seven of my colleagues sitting on that Committee to take those elements of the Health Accord and to address that. If funding is needed, we'll be presenting that to the Minister of Finance in subsequent budgets.

We have the All-Party Committee on Basic Income that is working through listening and hearing from experts in the field, again, to make sure we can come up with an appropriate model for this province. Ideally with the support of the federal government so that we can ensure that people at low incomes can get more income to avail of addressing things like cost of living. That has the two parties, plus the government party looking at that. We will continue our work over the next number of months.

At the current time, we're in discussions with the federal government around a proposed federal disability benefit, which if it comes to pass, which I'm hoping it will, it will go a long way helping persons with disabilities in this province to make sure that they have the appropriate income, again, to make sure that they can avail of the opportunities that many of us take for granted.

Speaker, it goes without saying that the budget that the Minister of Finance has tabled is one that has struck a balance. It keeps us on a strong fiscal path going forward. It's a positive document. It strikes the right tone with all sectors, I believe, right across the province. Any of the conversations I've had within the community with stakeholders, they see themselves in the budget. They know that the minister was listening and the government is listening in supporting their aspirations. Whether it's tourism, mining, offshore, you name it, the budget is hitting the right target.

Again, I encourage and implore, if I may, the Members opposite to support this budget because if it is not supported, I think it sends the wrong signal to the population and to our investors that there isn't a unanimity in how we're going to approach today's finances and tomorrow's finances.

With that, I will take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a great opportunity to get up and speak in the House of Assembly again. I would like to thank the voters in the District of Ferryland for putting me in here to get that opportunity to do so.

First of all, I'm going to start off, as I finished off my petition, on ambulances again. It's something that, you know, I'm pretty passionate about in my district. It's a complaint or an email that I get just about every day from someone with an issue that has to deal with ambulances. I spoke to the minister, let's say about a month ago, regarding the ambulance issue in Cape Broyle and he did get that solved to a point right now.

We certainly hope to see the rapid response unit come in. Because the same issue that will happen in Cape Broyle happens in Trepassey that once you get a call and the ambulance leaves the area, then we're without an ambulance and minimum, I'm going to say, is an hour and a half from Cape Broyle or Trepassey, a couple of hours when you don't have an ambulance in the area. It's been documented that people waited an hour and a half for an ambulance.

We'd certainly love to see that there and hope the minister will have a look at

repositioning the second ambulance back in Trepassey with whoever is going to be doing it after the owner there now is pulled out in July, I think it is. So hopefully, we'll be able to sit down and have a discussion of what the plan is to happen up there.

I got a call as of yesterday asking me about the ambulance and what they're going to do because of the incident that happened the weekend in regard to three or four days with the ambulance not being staffed. So it's a concern for the people in the district. It is my job to come in here and bring it up and keep their feet to the fire on issues in the district and certainly in the province. It is certainly something that I will continue to do for sure.

I will say that sometimes I think we have to have a look at our actions in the House of Assembly. I will use when there are Members' statements going on in the House of Assembly. You know, right now there are not a whole lot of people here, but sometimes we bring people in the House of Assembly and we seem to be not paying attention. It is an important day for somebody and if we're sitting here bragging about somebody, and not only when they're in here, but during most sessions of the House of Assembly. I think it is important that we pay attention and listen to what the Member's statements says. It's important for the person that is here.

We all do it, I'm not going to say I haven't done it myself, but we certainly have to look at paying attention and having a little bit of respect for the people that are here and pay attention. Some days we do get off, not every day, but I think we sit here and I look across and I said there is somebody in the gallery listening. We do have that issue sometimes.

I just think that puts it in our minds, if you look at somebody and say all right, it's time to quiet down now, there's an important message being transported. Not that this is not all important, but you have somebody

there to listen. I think it is something that we should be doing for sure.

I just wanted to put that out there because sometimes it bothers me and, again, it could be me another day, but it is just something that we have to be cognizant of as MHAs.

Even last week when there were people in the gallery, and they say to me outside, is that what goes on in there every day that people are not listening and people are over not paying attention? Now, we're asking questions to a minister and it could be the Finance Minister and she's listening intently, but then the other people are not or they're talking. They're not wrong in what they're saying. There are 40 people in here and we have a habit of doing that, all of us, myself included, that we have a habit of not paying attention or listening or look like we're listening.

Especially during Question Period, when the gallery is sometimes full, it's important that everybody is listening to the questions. It is important for everybody. It's just something that I wanted to throw out there; we're all guilty, let's be cognizant of that sometimes. I just think it is a reminder for us all to be doing that.

I will touch on – I'm going to say not a personal issue – but my brother was in hospital two weeks ago and he got out this Sunday past. So I went in, probably three days after he was in, he had some issues with confusion. They weren't sure; they tested him for four or five things. I will, before I get ahead of myself, he was in the emergency room for three days on a stretcher. I can tell you that from personal experience of going in to visit him. You bring your parents in and there's one chair, hardly enough room for you to go in there yourself and the corridor is full.

Now, they did a great job in there in regard to taking care of him, answering your questions, but you're right in the middle of the hub where all the doctors and nurses

and everyone is doing stuff. It's just incredible what goes on there. There's a screen in there, it's unbelievable the amount of rooms and where they have everybody stationed there in the hallways. It's incredible what goes on.

I will say this, the day I went in the triage room where you go in, it's about from the Speaker's Chair probably not down to the back wall here, but pretty close. There are chairs on both sides when you go in and they were chockablock full, absolutely full. Besides sitting down, there's a line up from the front counter right back to the back in the middle of all these people. I'm going in and I'm looking to see where my brother is in the emergency room. I would not dare go up to the counter and ask; I'd be frightened to death, skipping somebody in a line. That's the last thing you want to do; they think that you're skipping or getting ahead of somebody.

A nurse came along, announced somebody's name and I just asked her where my brother was to and she took me in. Well, she went up to the triage desk and then called me in. But I wouldn't dare go in. It was that full.

I think somewhere along the way in the health care system somebody has to get over there, whether it be a couple of people from the government side and someone from the Opposition. How can we make this better? How can we change what's going on in that emergency room?

Now, once he got a bed after three or four days, the help – I'm not going to say he never got help, because they did great help then. Once he got inside, they did every test they needed to do. They weren't letting him go until they found out what the issue was. The service was incredible from all the doctors and trying to keep me informed. So I'm not criticizing anybody who's working there, I'm just criticizing the system. How can we make that better? How can we get

in there and see if we can get help to make it more efficient?

Because when people are going out there for 10 and 11 hours waiting in the emergency, it's not acceptable. It's really not. If you have an issue that you have something that you need to go in, you could have bronchitis or whatever you may have and you can't get a family doctor and you're going in there. You say I'm not going in there and waiting 10 or 11 hours. Then you don't get your problem treated.

There is something that we can do somewhere along the way that government – and I don't know how we do it, but we have to get in there to get some help. We certainly do. We have to get some help in there.

It's just something that I said I had to bring up because it was something that happened that I saw personally how it happened. That happens every day. I met so many people in there. It's like a reunion. You go in there and there are that many people from my district when it was in there, it was incredible.

I know I spoke to another MHA as well, he's been in there for a long time, too, eight or nine hours himself in there. How do we get to fix that problem? Maybe we get down together as a committee or group and somebody just drop over there today and walk in the emergency room. How can we make that better? We can make that better. You get the little problems solved; we can make the big problems go away.

So the little things that are hanging this up, and I don't know what they are, I'm not a doctor, I'm not in there and what they have to do, but it's just incredible how many people are in there, it's just mind blowing.

I'm going to switch gears now. I'm going to touch on fishing a little bit.

AN HON. MEMBER: Go to the Herder.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'll get to that.

I'll touch on fishing a little bit and try to explain – I explained to one of my colleagues how fishing worked over the last few years.

I'm going to say back in 2017, before the quotas were cut, fishermen had a quota of about 30,000 to 34,000. That was their quota that they used to have. Then DFO comes in and cuts their quotas. They're down to 10,000 or 11,000 pounds of crab. So they're trying to make a living on that.

It's nice to say that the price was up high last year. You get an 11,000-pound quota, \$7 a pound as a rough number, \$77,000. You take that 11,000 pounds this year; their quota jumped from 11,000 pounds up to 18,000 pounds so now their income is basically about 40,000 pounds.

Now, the inshore fishermen are the ones that really get hurt the most because they have one quota, maybe they bought a second licence that they can utilize, maybe, but if they had one quota and they had 11,000 and it was \$7 last year and you bring it down to \$2.20 this year, well it's going to be hard pressed to be able to make a go of that.

Now, luckily they jumped up, but I did have numbers here that a fisherman had given me when they went down to 11,000 pounds of crab, they were getting a 20 per cent increase. So 20 per cent – and let's use an easy number for numbers because I know the Member for Terra Nova loves numbers, so let's use 10,000 pounds of crab and you put 20 per cent on it, they're going to get 2,000 pounds more, brings you up to 12,000 pounds of crab, and they do that.

They started at 34,000 and they went back to 10,000 or 11,000, jumping up 20 per cent every year, it would take them 8½ years to get back to 34,000 where they started. They lost their quota. But now this year, they

came in, they went from about 11,000 up to 18,000 pounds.

So, yes, they can make do with it, but now they have 18,000 pounds, they need to keep that quota. They need to get back to where they were. They're not back to their original high of 34,000 pounds where they were in 2017 or 2016. They need to get back there. So they cut the quota.

The crab is there. They go out now and they catch their crab in two to three days, four days, besides having a trip limit. That's the next thing. After we get this crab solved here now, if we do get it solved price-wise, the next issue they're going to face is going to be trip limits.

Now trip limits, in my mind – and I might be speaking out of turn here – only came in since COVID happened, because not having the number of workers in the plants to be able to process it. Well, I'm not going to say COVID is gone because it's not, but COVID regulations in these fish plants I think are gone, but they're still going to be limited to trip limits and they can only process so much.

How did they do it before COVID hit? That would be my question. Maybe they got an answer. Not that I need to know it, but it's nice for the people to know that there is a trip limit that will be set. So that's going to be our next thing we'll have to face, guaranteed. I get a lot of emails and I've got a lot of fishermen in my district and it's certainly needed to get back to being able to go fishing, for sure.

Speaker, I'll talk about daycare. I know I've certainly went through it. My family, I've got a couple of grandkids. They were fortunate enough to get in a daycare this year in January. The youngest grandkid is in full-time but my oldest grandkid, who's three, is only in for a half a day. My daughter is a substitute teacher – and I'll touch on teachers in a minute – so she's got to figure out a way, how they're going to get the

grandson at 12 o'clock along with trying to substitute. Her husband is a teacher as well.

So it's nice to say we've got \$10-a-day daycare, but we don't have places to put them and I'm getting calls. There are other after school programs that are after being shut down because they haven't got enough kids to run it. It's certainly a big issue. To create a plan for \$10 a day and not have the places to put people, it makes no sense to me. It's a great try and a great effort but the planning has to be a little better on this. The planning definitely has to be a little better.

I'll talk about cellphone coverage as well. We have a rapid response team. The minister had said – I'm going to say, more than a month ago now – that we're going to have a rapid response team. I'm sure they're not going to be using cellphones in that; they're going to have some sort of dispatch that they're going to use, the same as fire departments would. But cellphone coverage in our area is absolutely horrendous. I know everybody here got cellphones. Everybody here probably got a cellphone bill that's \$200 or more in your household, I would think. There are not many here that are less than \$200 I'll bet you any money.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yeah or more.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Or more.

So if you take that number just for Newfoundland and Labrador alone, or for the whole of Canada, and the amount of money that these companies take in and they're not providing the service that we're paying them for, I don't get it. I know the federal government are trying to get out and get funding to get towers and to get more signal coverage, and to be able to put wires or whatever they got to do, but the coverage is atrocious. Not only is it atrocious, I'm sure that nearly everybody here, where you're to now, there are more dead zones now than there were two years ago. They're not making any less money.

I leave here and I can drive, I can get it on going across town by the Hydro Building – right in the middle of St. John's you lose the coverage. You lose it going in on the back of Mount Pearl. You go up to Bay Bulls Big Pond and you lose it. You don't have it at all in Middle Pond. One time you could get a signal. You get nothing going through the Middle Pond area – nothing. I'll leave that.

Go outside of Tors Cove: no coverage. I drive through the middle of Bay Bulls. I can tell you three different areas that are in my town that weren't there two years ago. It's incredible that we let these companies – and we pay them. We're standing there paying them. I'm paying them, you're all paying them and the coverage is going downhill. They can give you every excuse in the world and we can't do something about it as a government. I don't know how we do it. I don't know but there's got to be some way you can sit down and make these companies accountable for the amount of money that they're taking from us. They're not providing the service.

We can sit here and we nod our heads. We don't do anything about it. We do nothing about it. I know we're trying. The minister has certainly gotten up and spoken on cellphone coverage and the amount that the federal government – I was at an announcement in Ferryland and we're trying, but it's getting worse, so much worse. It's just so frustrating. All of us here, all 40 MHAs, I would say we do a lot of work on our cellphones while we're driving because you get to make calls while you're going home.

Now, when I leave to go to Trepassey – and we're all smiling because we all know it's true – you try to get as many calls back as you can. But when I leave here I get on the phone for 10 minutes – losing it for three or four minutes is like losing it for 20 when you're driving. You can't wait to get that call finished. You drive further up the shore, past Tors Cove and you lose it again. You go to Cape Broyle and you lose it again. Go

to Ferryland, outside of Ferryland – Aquaforte to Fermeuse it's gone. You get to Fermeuse and Renews and it's pretty good, but lose it in Cappahayden. You lose it for 15 to 20 minutes. Every time you're driving along: Oh God, I've got to call this fellow. You start dialling and you can't call him. It happens so often and we seem to let it go.

My daughter lives over in Liverpool, England, now. They pay 20 or 30 pounds for a cellphone for a month, \$50; we're paying \$200. The service is terrible and we cannot and don't seem to want to do something about it. We all make these complaints. We sit here; us on this side are trying to hold your feet to the fire. We can't hold your feet to the fire when it's probably a federal problem, but it's a problem we've all got and it's a problem we don't seem to be able to take care to or try to get to.

I'd like to see somebody come up with a solution or somebody to be able to get together and see what we can do about it. This is our job. Forty MHAs, it's our job to try to figure this out. We are paying them a fortune in money and we're getting no service or very little. It's terrible.

Somebody come up with a committee. We come up with a committee and report on everything else. Somebody come up with a committee and see if we can dig in on these companies and make them accountable for the money that they're charging us, because it's certainly a big issue. We can sit here and talk about it all day.

Again, I'll go back to Crown lands. This has certainly been an issue in the news and along the way forever. In the last couple of years, it's certainly come to light that people – and I'm dealing with three or four cases and I don't see any end in sight for them. I don't see, unless the government does something to change the rules and regulations, to be able to do something about Crown lands. It happened with the Member for Bonavista. He certainly spoke on it last year sometime, or in the previous

session, that somebody has been living in their house for 40 years. They go to sell it and now they don't own the property that they're on for 40 years. There's something wrong with that.

Again, all 40 of us, I'm sure, are dealing with that. There's no one here can shake their head and say I don't have one Crown land issue. It's got to be everybody that got it. Maybe not in St. John's, but I'm sure you do. You got one, yeah. It's beyond me that we haven't got this in place. It's incredible that we don't do something about it, whether register, getting a quietening of titles. We have Members here that speak about it in our caucus meetings. You can sit there for hours bringing up topics that are going on in the districts of this issue.

My parents have a house – well, I'm 57, they've been living there that long. The House is 100 years old. Do they really own it? Look back, do they really own it? The house is paid off this long while, is the land theirs? I got land from my dad. Is it really mine? He gave it to me. Where did it come from? It's quieted now; you go get a mortgage on it. But a mortgage 20 or 30 years ago, did they check that?

Today, you will not get away without having quietening of titles on any land dealing with a mortgage. But there's lots of land out there that people go to try to sell – and we've seen it in Bonavista, as one example. I have a person in the Goulds that has land; they bought it 30 years ago. I have somebody in Cappahayden that bought land off family and now he's turning it back to the Crown so he can buy it back, legally. He paid for the land already, done all the work on it that he needed to do and it wasn't his. It wasn't theirs originally. So now he's going to turn it back in and pay the Crown to buy back land that he already bought, but in order to get it done, that's what he had to do.

It's incredible that he had to go through that, but he wanted to get this land. Now it's in an

area – he said: b'y, I don't know why I'm doing it but it's family land. I wanted to do it and there's no one else. We can't go back far enough now to get people to sign off and that's the issue we're running into now.

You get people that are 70 or 80 years old; who are you going to be able to sign off on it? There's no one there to witness that you lived there or somebody lived there before that. So it's something that I think the government has to get their heads around to be able to solve this problem for the people of this province, because it's not only in my district, it's all over this Island and all over Labrador, I'm sure, as well.

So it's something that we have to dig in on and be able to fix for the people. They rightfully own this. I had a gentleman meet me last year with a photo album and pictures. Say, 40 years ago, he had pictures. The land – there are no houses out where they were on the coast. It's all grown in now and he's applied for a couple of permits. He's not getting it. It wasn't granted to him way back in time and now he has no way to prove it and they're not giving it to him. So now the government is going to sell it to him at a fair market value, family land that's been there forever. I have three or four of those on the go.

There doesn't seem to be any solution to it. We have previous ministers after trying this. There was a report, I think, in 2015, the Member for CBS told me, a report on Crown lands and never acted upon. So again, I'm running out of time. I certainly have lots of topics to discuss.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Once again, it's always a privilege to get up here and speak on behalf of the people of Labrador West, the great snowy district of the province I guess we can call it.

It's interesting listening to other speakers and talk about the issues and stuff, and there's such a common thread through it all that we all see. One of the ones that seem to define it right now is the cost of living. Everyone is affected by it. Everyone sees it. It's affecting them in a multitude of different ways, some more so than others. Right now, the biggest thing is you just have to go to a grocery store and see how the cost of living has increased right there on the shelf.

We've always, especially in Lab West, do pay a bit more because as the logistics and trucking companies like to point out, well, we have to drive to Labrador to drop it off. I'll argue that the road is much more improved now than even in the last decade, so I don't know why we get, what I like to call, the Labrador tax on shipping.

At the same time, we dealt with that, but now we're dealing with a double whammy. We still have the Labrador tax that they charge us, but also at the same time you talk about the cost of actual groceries itself coming from the distributors.

It is an actual problem. It's a problem in the sense that some people have to change their habits. There are some people where it was something that they bought that was actually probably healthy and well thought out that has increased significantly versus some of the highly manufactured products out there, food stuff, that are not so nutritious, that sort of thing, but they're still a bit lower in price. So there are people making these life choices that are actually having negative impacts on their health. I know one of them, too, is diabetics. A lot of the food that diabetics eat is actually so much significantly more expensive than that manufactured stuff. It's so hard to see that now, that people have to make these

choices in their own personal lives that actually isn't that great for their health.

I'll take another example. Over this past April, when we went home for Easter, my youngest got sick and we were trying to figure out what was making her so ill. We looked at a bunch of different things. We figured maybe she's lactose intolerant or anything like that and we've got it narrowed down that there's a gluten intolerance there. So the pediatrician said hey, why don't we just take her back off this and we'll see how this goes, and she's been doing great. But the cost of gluten-free stuff, which is very nutritious, is almost six times the cost of regular stuff on the shelf.

This is where we talk about people with dietary needs and stuff like that are actually being most affected by this cost-of-living stuff because their products are a little niche; but, at the same time, it's almost like the best, healthiest stuff out there right now seems to be going up the highest. It's so unfortunate for so many people who don't have the means already as it is to deal with the cost of living and cost of food stuff. But, at the same time, these people are the ones who are affected the most by these inflationary things. It's the people that actually have dietary issues, the people that actually have health issues because the stuff that they need to buy is the most expensive versus the very highly processed food that, I'll say, my oldest daughter unfortunately enjoys. She loves her pizza pockets and that's it. But when you look at the value on it, it's not the greatest.

But, at the same time, my youngest now has some dietary issues and that stuff is a lot more expensive. That's something that now will affect the rest of her life. This is not just a simple thing where after a few weeks it passes. This is now my daughter's life. She will now be stuck on a dietary path that is so much more expensive than her older sister who can eat whatever.

So this is the thing that I'm seeing now. It's only in the past few weeks that I just really noticed how this is actually going to play out for a lot of families right now. I understand I'm in a place of privilege, but there are a lot of people out there who have these dietary issues that are not so fortunate that are having to make these choices.

They're also making other choices that are a detriment to their health. You look at seniors without proper drug coverage – and I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands also mentioned this. I've witnessed what he talked about, of seniors who are pill cutting. Because, oh, I have to take this, but I'll only take half today and I'll take half tomorrow. I have to drag it out for my prescription because my cheque doesn't come until this day.

This is where, as a New Democrat, but as a person that wants to see the betterment of all the people, this is where we need to have the big conversation – as this amendment says this is about the feds – and go to the feds and say where are we on pharmacare? Where do we sign on the dotted line so we get pharmacare in this province?

We do have the provincial program for low income, but there is a large swath of people in between that is not covered by that. At the same time, there are a lot of drugs that are not covered by that plan. This is where we need a universal pharmacare program to help the people, like Nan and Pop, who are pill cutting because they have to wait for that cheque to come; or the student who is working two jobs trying to put themselves through university and trying to get the most out of their plans, because it is expensive. Life right now is expensive but the detriment of your health shouldn't come on the back of this. This is where government needs to step in and actually help everybody as much as they possibly can through this.

But, at the same time, we need to be raising people up. Like the student that is trying to

go through university, we should be there to raise that person up, because a successful student helps this province because they go on to do such great things. And Nan and Pop needs that help too because they have done great things for this province, and that's why we should be there to help them through this crisis.

That is the same thing that we said of pharmacare. A universal pharmacare program in this province would raise so many people up at the end of the day and help so many people keep money in their pocket. The same with the cost of food and dietary issues, helping those people out would actually keep money in their pocket and raise those people up. We see it constantly.

I'll mention about housing. I know we've had this great discussion on it and I will, once again, thank the minister responsible for housing needs. He has been responding to a lot of stuff that I have been dealing with. I wrote him and I asked him to come to Labrador West and see the situation with seniors' housing, and he did it and I really applaud him for that. He actually lived up to his commitment to me and I thank him for that and, hopefully, now we can continue to work together to actually providing housing for seniors in Labrador West.

I'll still hold his feet to the fire for that promise but, at the same time, I do thank him for actually coming and visiting the district and seeing the situation that I've been talking about so much in this House. But housing, a roof over someone's head is one of the best things that we can do to help raise somebody up. It's to make sure they have a safe place at night, a safe place to live and make sure that it's adequate to live in.

Once again, the cost of housing in this province has ballooned. I'm seeing 70-year-old houses in Lab West going for \$500,000. There's no way in this world you would convince me that that house is worth

\$500,000. This is where we have to have a conversation about housing pricing, also housing accessibility, but actually house availability.

Right now, people just can't afford a home so they turn to the rental market and the rental market right now is so compressed that it is hard to even get into the rental market.

So this is where we need to have this big conversation on what does housing look like in this province? How do we make sure that people have roofs over their head at the end of the day and make sure that they can afford it, they can afford to live in it, they can afford to heat it and, from the case of afford, to maintain it?

We need to make sure that people have a safe place every night and a warm place every night. It's very important because, like I just said, the more people that we rise up, the betterment of this province actually is. We have more people in this province that are in better positions that can actually live and work to their full potential because some people want to help this province. Some people want to go to school, do great things and contribute back to the community that helped them.

So the cost of living and cost of housing are things that are putting pressure in the opposite directions that we want pressure put, because people right now want to contribute, but they can't because there are other things taking over. They're worrying about paying the bills. They're worrying about buying food. They're worrying about the cost of their medications. This is where we need to see that we're actually doing some true advocacy in this way.

We talk about these cost-of-living measures and we talk about how the best (inaudible) is by making sure that the money stays in people's pockets. Another thing is we talk about housing, but we talk about heating a home because that is also, once again,

another thing, especially for young people right now and seniors, is heating their home.

We talk about the cost-of-living measures but the cost-of-living measures that will affect every single person, renter, homeowner, anyone that pays a furnace oil bill or a hydro bill is why do we tax necessities of life? Furnace oil has a HST on it and we used to never have one. It actually was put back on. This is where we need to talk about removing the HST from furnace oil but also from residential electricity.

These are necessities. They're not conveniences; they're not luxuries anymore. I know at one time electricity was a luxury. It's not a luxury anymore, it's a necessity of life. So this is where we can put money back into people's pockets by removing the HST off residential electricity and furnace oil so that way people actually have a bit more money at the end of the month when their bill comes in their pocket.

These are the small things that add up over time because we have the ability to do it. We have the ability to make sure that that money stays in some people's pockets. At the same time, it helps towards the actual paying for the necessity that they require.

I'll look at my district, for example, the majority has electric heat, but I just have to go to my neighbours and the majority is stove oil or furnace oil. So these things are ways that we can do more with less and, at the same time, make sure that people have a warm home at the end of the day.

I'll talk about seniors and some of the struggles that I've seen. It's like in my district, after Wabush Mines closed and we found out the underfunded pension liabilities are there and a lot of seniors lost a lot of money over time. We seen that we actually had a senior population in Labrador West, because it's a new concept for Labrador West, the idea of seniors. The idea that we actually have an older senior population

now. But there was nothing ever put in place, even though we had different reports and stuff that talked about this demographic coming and that's the statistics.

But, unfortunately, it seems that just the way Labrador City was built in design and that, it was never really a senior-friendly place. Now we're finding out that a lot of stuff has to change, a lot of buildings have to be modified. It also goes hand in hand with persons with disabilities as well. We just realized a lot more work needs to be done in communities to make them age friendly and also friendly for those with disabilities.

I'm seeing it more and more that these groups and municipalities and stuff, that the funding to do it is just quite small. What I really want to say to government is take the opportunity to really review how much is available to groups, to municipalities to make buildings disabled friendly for persons with disabilities, but at the same time age friendly for seniors.

We have facilities. We have rinks, we have a pool, all this, but it's really hard for people with disabilities and seniors to participate in the community when they have these obstacles in the way. It's hard for them to go to the rink and watch their grandkids skate or a person with disabilities go and participate as well, it's really hard. The cost is just ballooned to make these buildings accessible and we're really not helping when it comes to an inclusive community.

So something I do want to put over to the government side is to really review the funding applications, the amount of money available and things like that to go over to these groups so that we can actually make these buildings in my community and other communities like mine age friendly, accessible for people with disabilities and have a real inclusive community, when it comes to these things.

I know there are so many people out there, especially seniors, that used to go to these

places and now is finding it very hard to do so. I think it's time that we actually reviewed how we look at older buildings, how we modify them, but at the same time make it available so that we can keep these buildings open, make sure that they're inclusive, they're accessible and that we actually are helping people, because it goes back to, again, healthy lifestyles. A healthy lifestyle is a great lifestyle in the sense that it keeps you young, keeps you active, but at the same time it helps with their own personal health, which means less visits to health care providers, but we want inclusive and wraparound communities.

I also want to mention, too, some of the great work in our communities by the Housing & Homeless Coalition, who though a lot of issues, especially with the low vacancy rate available in Lab West and the higher rate of people who are out, I wanted to actually take a moment and actually highlight the work of the Housing & Homeless Coalition in Labrador West and some of the work that Gena and her team has been doing to try to house people and try to do their best in a situation that is not favorable because it's a real concern that we can't house a lot of people.

We have a lot of people that are, through no fault of their own, it's just the unfortunate situation of Lab West and its economy, is putting a strangle hold on the availability of housing and stuff. I just wanted to actually give a shout out to Gena and her team who continues to help those in need.

Also, I want to highlight Lana and Jamie Anstey, Salvation Army captains in Lab West, who have done a lot of help with me for the same thing: helping people find housing and shelter and help people with the food bank and other things like that. They're leaving Labrador West soon to go to a new posting, but I tell you, those are two very fine people that really, really fell in love with Labrador West and actually helped us through a lot of situations.

So I want to mention them, because we have a very dynamic community with a lot of unique needs. They were such fantastic people to help with a lot of the situations and stuff when it comes to homelessness, finding people in situations that were not too great. Another thing they were really great at, too, was helping make sure that families were reunited in situations where people were flown out, and to make sure that people got on who couldn't afford it, making sure they got on flights and followed behind the air ambulance and stuff, too. They've done that a lot of times for some great families as well, so I want to give a shout-out to them.

Before I clue up, I do want to say another thing. Right now, in most places and stuff like that, it is hard. We talk about the use of food banks and stuff like that. We do applaud people for the work and stuff they're doing at the same time, but we really need to pay attention to the numbers of people that are using these things, these food banks, because it is alarming how much, the percentage that the usage has increased.

I come from a mining town; I worked in the mining industry, so I'll use the old canary in the coal mine kind of thing. That statistic is a troubling statistic and it does raise a lot of red flags for me in that. When we see usage rise, we know that there's some trouble. The root of the trouble is what we should be looking for and not the band-aid solution.

I think that a very good in-depth discussion and investigation into how do we reverse this trend, because year over year it keeps rising up. So I think this is where government really needs to take a (inaudible) is to look at the root causes of food bank usage and to find how we can permanently fix the situation and make it more affordable for people in this province.

With that, Speaker, I thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I'm now recognizing the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Again, it's a pleasure to stand and speak on the budget as we make our way through this budgetary process. Earlier this morning, the Minister for CSSD got up and thanked the Minister of Finance for – and I'm not going to quote but it was something along the lines of saving us from disaster or crisis or whatnot.

I would never debate the work ethic of the Minister of Finance because there's no doubt in my mind; she has to be one of the most hardest working people here, without a doubt, for what she does and her department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Saying that, the Minister of CSSD, as well, runs a good department. I've dealt with Wayne Follett in his department, and I'm going to name him because he's an absolutely fantastic man who has helped myself out and everybody across the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: So in saying that, all those people behind the scenes, thank God they don't see any political lines. They don't see any colours. They are completely colour blind when it comes to helping out the people across the province. Those are the true champions, those are the true heroes and they deserve a thanks every single day.

So thank you very much for all those people behind the scenes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: I'm going to go back to the minister's comments and I'm going to ask: what would saving us from a disaster or crisis look like? Well, thank God that we are

saved, because if we weren't or if we would be, we wouldn't have a health care crisis, which we do. We certainly do have a health care crisis. As we look beyond our borders for more doctors, for more nurses, health care workers, respiratory therapists, it's important to get these people. Unfortunately, they're not here now.

We hear that it's a global issue, it's a global problem that health care workers can't be found. My question is: where are they all gone? If it's a global issue, they're not leaving the planet, are they? You know what I mean. So where are they all gone?

I'm sure that the rest of Canada has the struggles, but we can't sit here and say every single province is the same because they can't be. The fact of the matter is Ontario are taking in our patients. So I'm sure they are feeling a bit of a crunch as well, but it can't be the same level that we are feeling it. If so, they wouldn't be able to take in patients from other provinces, obviously.

We can't even take care of our own patients and they're taking patients from other provinces. The health care crisis is not the same right across Canada so a comparison of Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of Canada is a little bit ludicrous to me.

Other crises that we are facing right now: the mental health crisis. We heard from our hon. Member earlier from Labrador, especially with the Indigenous Affairs and the crisis they have up there for mental health. No different than here on the Island as well. We have a huge mental health crisis. People are waiting six, nine, 12 months to get in to see somebody after an initial visit, an initial emergency visit. Well, a lot can happen in day, a week, let alone six months, nine months or a year. These people need to be seen as soon as possible.

We need to fix those resources; we need to ensure that they're there for the people. Not

just the first emergency visit, but they need to be followed up with. We need those resources and people in place, and we need to follow up with these people to ensure that they don't take their own lives, that they are set on a course of success where they can be happy again. You know what, that's a crisis in itself as well.

We have the cost-of-living crisis. It is affecting just about everybody. If you're not inside a bubble – if you're outside the bubble that some of us fall into sometimes, you see the cost-of-living crisis. Whether it be, again, fuel for heating homes; something as simple as food, fuel for vehicles. It's absolutely insane when you look at it; people are struggling for the necessities of life.

We're not talking about a second vehicle for a family; we're not talking about a single vacation for a family or a second vacation. We're talking about the necessities of life: fuel, food and heat. It needs to be there and, right now, we are lacking in that and a lot of people are hurting out there. We want to ensure those people are taken care of in the future and there's a plan moving ahead, a strategy that is going to address these issues. That is another crisis.

The education crisis, of course: we're learning now it's not just doctors and nurses but our teachers. We need more teachers here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm glad that my son, Declan, is going to go in to be a teacher; I hope he stays right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. But to ensure that, we need to create the nest, we need to create the proper resources to keep people here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

With the education crisis, goes along, of course, with Memorial University, which, again, we heard it earlier, a 20 per cent decrease from last year – the tuition hikes. We need to ensure that we create a stable future for MUN students, where they can come on in and get a good education and draw some people back into the province. I

think that's important when you're talking about people coming from outside the province and wanting to stay here. Those MUN tuition rates, they certainly kept a lot of people here.

You can't put a price on education, as my colleague for Bonavista knows all too well and also the Leader of the Third Party. They had great (inaudible) careers as teachers and we're so happy that they did, but we need to ensure that the education crisis is taken care of as well, and MUN students want to stay here.

The fishing crisis: again, I refer to my colleague for Bonavista. We're down to one species. We're trying to salvage one species for a fishing capital of the entire world at one time, Newfoundland and Labrador. I remember as a kid you'd see the old commercials where John Cabot first came. You'd see him throw the bucket over the side of the boat and just pull it up and there are lots of codfish in there. Somebody said we have enough codfish to last us until the end of time. Unfortunately, through mismanagement, we all know now that's not true.

So we want to hold on to our species as much as we can. Those numbers on the seals, they're real. We all see the videos every single day; there is such an imbalance in the ecosystem it's not even funny. Inaction is the only thing that continues with this. Lots of talk – lots of talk. Talk does nothing. We need to ensure there's a strategy moving ahead to keep our fishery viable. I mean at one point some-odd billion dollars for something that should be up in the multiple billions, \$6 billion, \$7 billion, my God, imagine that coming into our province. How much spinoff can that create? That's something that we need to embrace and we need to hold on to.

Not to mention it's part of our heritage and culture. It is a huge part of our heritage and culture. I can't imagine going to Saskatchewan and saying the only you can

do now is canola and that's it. Every other farm we have to shut down. Canola is not going to be good every year either. My God, they'd have a conniption out there because that's their culture and heritage. That's the backbone of what their economy is built on. Just like the fishery has been the backbone of our economy for quite some time now and we want to ensure that we embrace that and hold on to it as long as we can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Then we also have a seniors' crisis. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talks about it quite often with the seniors. The seniors, once again, they are in crisis. We need to take care of our seniors because – we all say it – we're all going to be there one day. So we want to make sure that the seniors who are there right now, they deserve to be taken care of, any way they can. God love the seniors. They're all so very humble. A lot of them remain quiet. Most seniors remain quiet. In their quiet lives of desperation sometimes just to try to get another tank of oil, thank God the summer is coming to give them a little bit of reprieve from stuff like that. But sunny days don't necessarily bring in food into your fridge or cupboards or into your pantry.

Seniors definitely have it tough. It doesn't seem like there's a whole lot of relief for them in this budget. With the 5 per cent increase, it works to be less than 20 cents a day. So there's not a whole lot there for seniors and, unfortunately, the seniors' crisis will continue as well.

Of course, we have our housing crisis, which my hon. colleague works very hard on, and you do. Like he said, listen, there are ministers that are less accessible than others, but not the Minister of CSSD. Every time I've ever had to call –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – him, he himself has called me back ASAP. Again, the people that work with him, they definitely are top notch, too.

The fact of the matter is we do have a housing crisis here. As hard as we're working on it, we need to get there a little bit faster because yes, we seen that there was 2,300, I guess, on the waiting list. That's 2,300 possible families. So now that could be distanced out or levelled out to thousands upon thousands of people that are either couch surfing or living with loved ones. Hopefully, nobody is on the streets. I'm sure there are but, unfortunately, they are and that's a reality of life.

But we've got to try to get them off the streets; we've got to try to get people into their own homes. That's where they flourish the most and that's how we're going to be successful. Success isn't determined by the strongest group in your population but the most vulnerable people in your population. When we have a strong most vulnerable group, the rest of us thrive because we'll get stronger as well. So I'm really, really happy about that.

So all this adds up to be a crisis that we didn't avert; we didn't get saved from. This is the reality that we live right now. Most of us here, we don't live with a lot of these realities; we don't. None of us do because we are inside of this bubble. We are inside of this bubble right here. But when you step outside this bubble, you see that a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians suffer from one, if not a lot of the crises that I just mentioned right here they have to deal with it on a daily basis. It is our job to create an environment that gets rid of these crises and we can move on with a successful future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'm under no imagination or no non-reality that all of this is going to be solved overnight and I understand our fiscal restraints. There are definitely fiscal restraints. The government only has so

much money to work with. That's a given. That's like every government every single year. But when we talk about our choices for the money that they're working with – and I brought this up a few times and I'm going to bring it up again because it's of concern to me – that in a multi-billion dollar budget, it may not seem like a lot when it might be just a couple hundred thousand dollars.

But again, we have a Premier's office opened up in Grand Falls-Windsor last year. An unnecessary Premier's office that was decided to open up at a cost of, I don't know, a few hundred thousand dollars. Again, a multi-billion dollar budget might not seem like a lot but when you don't have a lot, it's a lot, trust me.

So this office opened up – and just to let everybody know, by the way, I think that it's important for people to know that this office is by appointment only. You can't walk into this office. It's appointment only. There's no access to this office for the average person off the street. You'll see a big sign on the building: By appointment only, call this office. I'll go on record saying this and somebody can call me out if you wish, but I'll prove it. In most cases, they're not in the office. That office is empty, vacant. Waiting, I guess, for a call or an appointment, but the paycheques are still going out, I guarantee you.

You talk about fiscal restraint and you talk about where we can save money. Well, you can save money right here. You can close down this unnecessary office, get your friends out of there and maybe let them apply for another job somewhere else because this office is not needed. When you talk about fiscal and you've got an office that's costing a couple of hundred thousand dollars a year or whatever, well, where could that money go? Where could that money go because that's real money? Where could that money go?

We have a Lionel Kelland Hospice. I've talked about it many times, the first community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a fundraising team that are working every single day, good men and women that have to go to the community and fundraise. Take their time and fundraise, which is great. There's nothing wrong with it but, right there, maybe we could take some money from the Premier's office that's not needed, put it back over into the Lionel Kelland Hospice. What a great donation that would make – what do you think? I think that would make a great donation. That would go a lot further, in my opinion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We'll call that one practical use.

The food banks in Grand Falls-Windsor are constantly empty – constantly empty. Now you can say it's a different stream of revenue, yada yada yada. We are people with necessities at the end of the day. That's all we are. We can simplify this. So can you imagine there were an extra \$100,000 would go towards a food bank? My God, that would be absolutely fantastic.

So instead of having an empty Premier's office that you can access by appointment only, maybe we could feed some people. What do you think? It would be a great idea. There's your practical use once again.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: What's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Not from what I hear. You should come out some time and check it out.

Millertown – so Millertown was where we changed the name of the lake because everybody was so concerned about it. Everybody was so concerned about Millertown. Millertown, they have Indian

Point up there, a beautiful place. It's so historical. They applied for a special assistance grant many, many times to try to get some ditching up there. As the water comes in further and further, it washes away the history up there. Denied on several occasions – very, very shameful. But we're so determined to give this lake the best attention we can. Unfortunately, it doesn't deserve a special assistance grant to save Indian Point and all that history out there. That would be practical use for me, you know.

As a former paramedic and a first responder, there's a lot more that EMS providers can bring to delivery of critical care in the rural and under-serviced areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. Some of those could be point of care labs, LUCAS boards. LUCAS boards are boards that give automatic compressions so the paramedics can work on other things because, listen, if you've never done CPR, it gets tiring. I'm sure some people have here. It gets tiring. There's no LUCAS board in Grand Falls-Windsor. We don't have one. Could that be used in Grand Falls-Windsor instead of an unattended Premier's office that wastes taxpayers' money? I think so. I guarantee it.

Incubation and portable ventilation: there are so many things that can be used. These are practical uses. There is no real strategy to deploy and push these technologies to first responders, but do you know what? They could use them. Give us the tools and we'll get the job done. That's what somebody told me out there recently: Give us the tools and we'll get the job done. Do you know what? I couldn't agree more.

Home care hours: many people in my district and in all of your districts need more home care hours. Could \$100,000 get you a few more home care hours to people who truly, truly need it? Well, I think the money from an office where it's little access, you need appointment only, I guarantee you that money can go towards a lot more stuff in my community. I'm sure it could go towards

more stuff in your communities than an office that is just taking up space and, in my opinion, it's not doing a whole lot.

Again, accessibility is a big, big issue in that office. So I'm going to say –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: That's right, I got you. Yeah, that's right.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. TIBBS: So the minister agrees with me.

Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that. The only crowd (inaudible) that's perfect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair, please.

C. TIBBS: I'll pivot a little bit here to Fred Card. I'm going to take a page from your book, the Member for Bonavista. Fred Card is a constituent of mine in Badger. He's had his homestead up there on a parcel of land for 43 years. He's farmed carrots, cabbage, all kinds of root vegetables, beets – everybody loves beets. That man has provided his family and that community up there for 43 years, in a province where I don't know if we do 8 per cent of our own food. Food security is a big, big issue.

Fred Card got a letter today, and he sent it to me today, from the minister's department. It says: A compliance inspection was completed on this parcel of land on August 1, 2022, that confirmed you were not compliant with the development conditions of the lease agreement. The land has been inoperative for its intended purpose, root crops, for a period of three years. The

Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture has determined that this area is no longer viable for future agriculture production and this lease has been cancelled.

A 70-year old man, 43 years, now they're going to say, do you know what? He didn't comply, three years he didn't comply. That man got a letter this long. Imagine how much time the department could have saved with a phone call, a two-minute phone call. What's going on out there, Fred? I see that you haven't planted anything in the past three years. Everybody has their issues.

This government continues to talk about COVID and how COVID has thrown a monkey wrench into their plans for the future, how it has pretty much crippled Newfoundland and Labrador and brought us to our knees. Well, guess what? It works for the constituents as well. COVID has affected the constituents as well. So we need a little bit of leeway. I'm asking for a little bit of leeway, especially with someone like Fred Card.

Maybe the minister or the minister's department could reach out to this man and speak to him and say: What's going on, Fred? You're in your 70s man, you've had this for 43 years, why didn't you plant anything? Well, because of COVID, because these people have their struggles, too. You can't lean on COVID because of your disasters or because of your failures and then expect the people of the province just to keep pulling up their socks and moving forward, too. It's affected everybody in the province.

So I would encourage the minister if he could please reach out to Fred Card himself, a 70-year-old man who has had a homestead planting there for 43 years. Reach out to him, talk to him.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's listening intently.

C. TIBBS: Yeah, I know Fred is listening. So, Fred, I'm asking the minister to reach out to you. Talk to this man; work with this man. Government's job should be to work with people, not dictate people. So let's work with people like Fred Card, let's work with people across the province and do our job and ensure that they have the successes that we all want them to have.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to get up and speak on behalf of the fine residents of Topsail - Paradise and, of course, for residents as a whole, given my role as a shadow minister for Health.

When we're talking about the budget – and I have gotten up in the past and already spoke to some issues – I can tell you when you first come into this House of Assembly and you're asked to get up and speak for 10 or 20 minutes, you always wonder: How am I going to do that? But I can tell you right now, once you get into it and you get to learn your subjects and your answers, you're actually saying: How can I do it in 20 minutes because there's just so much you can talk about?

So what I don't get out today, I'm sure I'll get another chance to talk to because there are many serious issues in this province that need to be dealt with. As I've said previously, there are items in the budget, the current budget, that I applaud, but then there are also a lot that I would like to see in there.

I listened to the Member for Torngat Mountains this afternoon talking very passionately about her district. Of course, we also had a Member rise on a point of order, who, again, I respect as a passionate Member within the House. So it's good to

see that we're passionate about the issues. But when I listened to the Member for Torngat Mountains, I mean, you can really feel the plea in her voice for people in her district, talking about suicide and when you realize the actual population of that district and a rate of 30 per cent or more, that's huge.

Everywhere in this province we are dealing with health issues, we're dealing with crisis. I have talked to many residents in my community and some have said it very plainly and it's a common-sense approach really when you think about it, what we do in this House should be about people helping people. It is so simple and, to be honest with you, I wish it was that simple because some of the ways we have to help individuals, there are many complexities to some. Some are simpler than others.

I do want to say, sometimes your job as an MHA, whether in government or in Opposition, can be very trying on you. I know as an Opposition MHA most of those that call you are calling you as a last resort. They have nowhere else to turn and they're looking for help. It is very rewarding. It's actually more rewarding than not when you can help people.

The last little, while I have gotten some lovely emails, there not many months ago I got one from an elderly couple, one was in palliative care, and we were able to get them together before one partner had passed and the family were very grateful for that. Another recent one was I was able to get two seniors together in the one retirement home, long-term care facility.

Only this week or last week, I got a call that was very appreciative from a new grandfather who showed a lovely picture of his newborn grandchild and was very appreciative of what I've done in terms of IVF.

But I want to be clear; it's not what I've done. I act as a voice, I act as a conduit for

those who come to me and I reach out to those that can help. In those three instances, I can't ignore the Minister of Health and Community Services because he was able to work with me and others to make those happen. I do realize that it's not something you can just do for everyone. There's a way forward there.

So I really do appreciate that and I hope to continue that relationship and hopefully we'll all continue to get those letters, those emails that tell us thank you and that you made a difference. That's all we can do. I will always answer the phone. People know that. I will always pick up and I will always respond, but I may not be able to get them the response they want. But I will work towards that and I'll continue to work towards that.

In health care, there are some very troubling situations. I get them every day and I reach out to the appropriate staff. I will say the staff and the minister's CA and EA are just fabulous with getting back to me. I can't deny that; they've done wonderful there. I know they work to get responses to these individuals, but we still continue to have issues.

I'll just read this. This came in yesterday, actually. I just want it on the record. Just to give an example of some of what we deal with and this is a retired nurse who wrote. She said: Please accept this letter as a plea for help. My dad – she names her father – was admitted to the Health Sciences on Saturday, April 22 at 10 a.m. He had an intracerebral hemorrhage that resulted in an immediate stroke and right-side paralysis. He has been on a stretcher in emergency since his admission. He did not require any resuscitation and has been waiting on a bed in neurology since mid-afternoon Saturday.

At a time where it is imperative to reposition him every two hours, we've left him on a stretcher on his back for four days now. I hope he has not developed any bedsores as a result as that would further impede his

progress. We have not met with any interdisciplinary team members or even a member of his neurology team since Saturday morning. This was received Tuesday – yesterday.

There are nine-plus patients in hallways here at the Health Sciences emergency, all suffering from some ailment. All in complete view of visitors. My sister actually had to cover a naked man on a stretcher here Saturday night. I left the nursing profession 15 years ago and I've never seen such a state of affairs. It's sad that we are okay with this lack of compassion or care. I've said nothing for four days. I'm just thankful my dad is alive and I have not been able to process much beyond that. As a retired vascular nurse, I would never be able to work in such conditions. We need to do better for all citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador.

If there's anything I can do as a citizen, I'd be happy to volunteer to help out in any way – very concerned. If you walk through our ER here at the moment, you'd be frightened for any family member. Our nursing and medical team are doing what they can. As I stated previously, they appear overwhelmed, overworked and unsupported. I can see why my niece left the nursing profession after three years of employment here. We will lose more if we don't change our ways.

That was one email I got yesterday. So I get similar emails on a regular basis and it gives you a real feel for what's happening in our health care. I know there are no quick fixes but there are solutions that can help ease that. I'm glad in the budget that one of them was the continuous glucose monitoring devices. That will reduce some major illnesses. That will reduce visits to the ER. That will reduce calls for an ambulance. That will save health care millions on an annual basis.

So there are those solutions – I wouldn't even call it outside the box, but there are

those solutions that we need to start implementing that can have immediate impacts on the health care of our individuals out there, our Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

When I talk about health care and we had it there before, the past year, when we talked about the Canada Health Transfer and I rose in this House many times and spoke to it and I said we need to change the formula. We need to change the formula around health care transfers. You can go back and you can pull up those press releases from the federal government. They have it on site, and they have the whole transfer allotments there.

If you look at the Labour Market Development Agreements – I stand to be corrected – there are changes every now and then, but there are about 17 to 19 different variables that come into play for each province that allocates how much.

For the health care transfer, it's per capita. We were under the impression that this new negotiation, this new addition to the health care transfers was going to be something different. If you go down through all those categories, the lion's share is still per capita. It's still per capita. We have the oldest population. We have some of the highest rates of major illness and it's still per capita, with a declining population.

So that's not working for us at all. They talked about the federal government offered us these bilateral agreements that would be flexible and tailored. Yet, those bilateral agreements, our investments are centred around four shared health priorities. It's flexible but it's not.

If I'm negotiating a bilateral agreement and I'm doing what's best for the province, then I'm looking at what the province needs, what we need, not what someone tells us, oh, you've got to fit in these four boxes. I'm saying no, we have to look at what this province needs. If you're not changing the

formula, at least give us the bilateral agreement that we can set the parameters around and address the real issues in this province.

Until we start doing those things, we're still pushing money out and, as we heard earlier today, we're going to slip money because we're putting them in categories where we're just not going to be able to spend it: the prenatal, the baby supplement. So you've got to change some parameters around that, or use it somewhere where you can use it.

We know some of the federal programs in the past have been – and some still out there – use it or lose it. If you can't use it all in the category it's supposed to be used in, well, you're going to lose it. So why are we not negotiating what we need more over here? Why are we not doing that? It sort of makes sense if you're dealing with one province and what we need, because each province is not the same.

I heard the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talk. He actually talked about health transfers right away and I believe his words were: the feds are getting off the hook. I tend to agree with him. We need to negotiate for this province what we need and if it is the amount in the bilateral agreement, let's use it for what we need it for, not for the four boxes or for priority areas that are given to us. That's not flexibility. That's not tailored to what we need.

I also listened to the Member for Terra Nova earlier today. He touched on the daycare and the lack of a plan. I spoke to it yesterday when I presented a petition and we can call it what it is. I mean, if you do a proper plan, then you have some notion of what some of the reactions will be or what some of the unintended consequences would be, if you had a plan.

We all applaud \$10-a-day daycare, don't get me wrong, we all applaud it but it has

created so many unintended consequences. The Member mentioned about the one size does not fit all and that's correct. We need to work with the different groups and find the solution. We offered some solutions. We offered solutions around the regulation change back in 2017, around training certification, around those who could work in daycares.

It's great that we had 10 per cent more inclusive workers there. That's fine. But what we've done now is we're in a transitional period where we're short on daycare workers and we're trying to transition to a time where we can get them all trained up, which is not going to happen overnight. We need at least two years in between.

So there's a solution: let's extend that period for at least two years. Let's extend it for two years so that it's an easier transition into where we're going. Let's not hit that pothole and not crawl out of it. Let's find a way over it to get us to the other side. Let's do that. We've offered those as workable, doable solutions.

Because again today we talked about population growth and that, we have to grow our own, too. I have emails upon emails of professional families, dual income families, who are considering – well, they're not even considering it because they really don't have a choice – staying home, one of them staying home. Now, I think it's the best thing if you can stay home and raise your children, but is it practical? You still need income. You still need to put food on the table. You still need that.

So we need to start looking at that and seeing – and some of these, a lot of these are health care professionals, because we know working shift work, trying to get child care at different hours is even more difficult.

We'll keep standing up here and we'll keep pushing this. I mean, that's our job. Our job is to hold government accountable. Our job

is to try and get the best deal we can for our residents and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as a whole.

The Member for Torngat Mountains today, she talked about statistics. She talked about acronyms. Do you know what? That's very practical. Yeah, if we're talking about the Canada Revenue Agency, we don't want to hear that. CRA is fine, the agency. But when you're talking about some of these important initiatives and that, it bears saying the whole thing out so that you continually are reminded of what the issue is, you know what it is, you're not caught up in an acronym. I know acronyms are done so you don't take up as many words in a document, but there some acronyms that need to be read out full time.

The other point, we do it here a lot in the House, we get up and we talk statistics and, again, the Member for Torngat Mountains mentioned that as well, it goes back to how I started this first 20 minutes. It's simply about people looking after people and working for people. It's all about people when it comes down to it. Behind these statistics, whatever statistic you're talking about, are people. It's people behind those numbers. It's people there and you have to know the particular cases for these individuals, you have to deal with the person and not the statistic.

Statistics give us a general overview of what's happening, it's nice measuring it and it's probably a benchmark some people use it for. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that behind these statistics are actual individuals with families, with jobs, with responsibilities and who are probably in dire need of help. Those are the people that reach out to us.

Going forward, I hope – and I think we all do and we all will – we look after those who reach out to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

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