



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 33A

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Monday

May 8, 2023
(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6:15 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call the Concurrence Motion report of the Social Services Committee.

SPEAKER: Social Services Committee.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to say it's great to be back in the Legislature.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: I've been away. I guess I'm starting week six of a personal nightmare that, I think, all of us in society hope never happen to you. It caught my wife and I very much off guard, but I have to tell you, I can't think of a better province, a better place and community that I live in than Happy Valley-Goose Bay, the wraparound from this Legislature, from all sides of this Legislature, from across the province and I thank all of you for the support. It's been magnificent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: My wife travelled down with me and we're going to go through a hanging here on Wednesday, so I'm very glad she's going to be present. We talked about it and I said, I want to talk a little bit about what we've been doing the last few weeks because, as much as all of us know the importance of the health care system, until you are right inside it and you really, fully depend on it, do you really start to understand what's happening there.

I want to take a few minutes, if I may, for the benefit of everybody listening here and at

home, to say thank you to so many heroes. From the janitors to the doctors to the porters that take you to radiation, the nurses that come in on a Sunday morning. I've spent my last four weeks in a cot beside my wife and we had two weeks on the cancer ward here in the Health Sciences Centre. The quality, compassion and calibre of folks there, but also back at the Labrador Health Centre, absolutely magnificent.

I just wanted to pass along a few stories. It is tough and I appreciate all your help and support, and we're going to give this our best positive, determined try. But I want to point out a few things that I just found striking. Just a couple of Sundays ago, we were on the cancer ward and it's a tough place. People are really needing a lot of attention, a lot of care. There's alarms going off frequently and you don't get a lot of rest there. I'm relatively healthy but I'm still feeling tired from that experience.

But the effort and the compassion of those staff. There was a Sunday morning, one gentleman – I won't go into too many details – but he had his radio playing. To watch the five nurses coming on to the ward two Sunday mornings ago, all singing away to that same song as they took care of those people and cleaned up, cleaned them, supported and helped them. I can't say enough about the people inside our health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. TRIMPER: My wife had some bars of soap done up and she said now let's take this with us on this journey and when we see somebody that's doing something nice, helping us or needs a little thank you, we'll hand out one. Well, we ran out of soap quite a while ago. So I've got to get another load of soap done because we're not done this journey yet, but I can tell you there are a lot more good people out there.

A couple of other things I want to tell you. People always say what can we do? What

can I do to help? The overture is very nice and I must say very appreciated by both Caroline and I. I think ultimately what we need to do is support those in the health care system. We need to, as I think we do in this House, from all sides of this House, is pay a lot of attention on health care. I feel we also need to do what we can to find a cure for cancer and all the other issues that we're dealing with in this province. So if you want to help, I'd say let's throw our money at those resources and that's what we can do.

A couple of little interesting observations. One is – I think I've spoken to some of you before – we've been very proudly supporting a couple of Ukrainian families in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. A few weeks ago, just before we were waiting for a ride down here to start radiation therapy, one of the Ukrainian families came to visit and while they were in our room – now they're fresh off leaving a war zone and very tough situation. They arrived here on the 6th of December, we met them and my wife and I escorted them back to Labrador and we've become very close.

They were watching and still trying to understand English and what was happening, but the doctor came in and the doctor was there with a nurse, and there was a bit of an exchange and then they watched the procedures and they were standing in the corner and then after the doctor left, they said: Wow, in Ukraine, that same situation, what will happen is the doctor will come to the hospital room where the family member is. The family explains to the doctor what is needed, blood pressure checked, maybe a heart rate, some other procedures and whatnot, and the doctor will say well, that will be so much money.

The family literally pays the doctor to come through the door to then perform those services. I'm just thinking we complain and we are frustrated and we need to find the best way to take care of our population, but when I compare to some other locations

that are very close to us now, it was quite remarkable. They were just struck by the fact that I never had to grab my wallet. I just had to be there, support my wife, and watch her get the best care that we can deliver in this province. Anyway, we are very much in the hands of a lot of good people and I want to thank all of them for what they're doing for us.

I'd next like to just break from that and, again, I thank all of my colleagues and I'll see you at the hanging on Wednesday.

Speaking to some other issues and I want to thank my colleagues on the government side but also on all sides for helping with a lot of issues. There are many challenges we have in all of our districts. Back in Lake Melville one that has certainly dominated a lot in the news, it's been a big challenge in our community, and that is with seemingly an increasing challenge with those facing addictions, homelessness, transients and so on.

It has been a challenge to figure this out. This is something that not only Happy Valley-Goose Bay is struggling with, but I would suggest every hub community across Canada, including here in St. John's. I'd like to thank former Leader of the Opposition and former Premier Paul Davis and for some of his team for some of the advice that providing myself and others from The Gathering Place.

I'd like to thank the folks in Ottawa at The Oaks and the inner-city shelters there, the experiences that they've had over the last couple of decades and the advice that they're sharing with us.

I think our challenge in Happy Valley-Goose Bay right now is we need to get the information out, we need to explain to everyone that decisions going forward – and these are decisions that have frankly been well supported. There's some \$30 million which is allocated in the budget for this year, that's for a long-term solution for – we

refer to it as – a low-barrier facility that will address so many of these issues. We'll start to give people some confidence. We'll start to give them some counselling. We'll start to get them back on their feet. It may not fix everything, but, you know, in due course and in due time, we will get there.

In the meantime, I get it, I live in the community. I know some of the issues around public safety. I was also very, very pleased to see the Minister of Justice and Public Safety allocate some \$500,000 towards public safety this year. Unfortunately, we're having some challenges in getting everyone to the table, but I can tell you that the financial resources are there. I do believe that the technical solution, especially with the action team that's now been meeting, some 2½ to three years, I do believe they've brought their experience and their expertise together. I feel that that will be very important to now explain to the community how this can work, what it's based on and how they can all pull a rope.

I have to give a big hats off to the community because on Saturday – sometimes the best ideas come out of a little spontaneous conversation, but the community in Happy Valley-Goose Bay started with a couple of business leaders and they started a massive clean up. I was just heading to the plane with my wife on Saturday morning and people were out in droves picking up litter, garbage, cleaning up the community and taking pride in the community. So I have to say, well done Happy Valley-Goose Bay. We can get through this. I can't think of a better community right now to live in. Again, based upon my own personal experience, but also in my role of representing you as your MHA.

A couple of other things I wanted to mention is that some great progress is going on in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the Lake Melville area. I've got the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in front of me and I need to thank him and his team for

continuing work on Route 520. I think this is a very important highway connecting Sheshatshiu, North West River and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

It was built many decades ago. It's built, essentially, at sea level and a lot of the challenges we have is that when spring floods occur, which, frankly, are not going to happen this year because we are bracing right now, unfortunately, for a potential forest fire. It's very dry. But usually when we do have spring runoff, our highways are blocked. So these are not inexpensive repairs, but there's substantial monies being allocated this year for lifting the roadbed and getting some more of that important highway paved. I thank them for that.

I also want to draw attention to another important issue that I've spoke about a lot in this Legislature and that's for the folks in Mud Lake. The relocation program, the financial package has been accepted by many. I don't have the exact numbers but I would suggest probably the majority of the households have recognized our situation.

I'm very grateful. I'm very happy to have worked with them and with my colleagues here on this side of the House to actually get them in a much safer location. The results of a million-dollar study a few years ago indicated that they were probably going to get hit again. I'm very pleased to see they're now in a better place as these transactions are occurring. So we've still got a few weeks to go on this until the end of June, so I look forward to seeing more people coming forward.

Speaker, with that, I think I'm going to pause. I don't want to go back and repeat, but I did want again to thank my colleagues in the House and across the province for the support they've shown my wife and I, personally and professionally. I also acknowledge the good work that you're all doing. Whether you're in government listening and bringing forward good ideas and spending appropriately or challenging

and seeking a better way, I thank you all very much.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I do wish the Member and his wife all the best. Hopefully, we'll –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: – we'll see everybody healthy.

It's a pleasure again to stand on behalf of Topsail - Paradise residents and I guess the province as a whole, especially when it comes to speaking on health care. There are many facets of health care I could talk about, but let me start with this one that has to do with mental health.

Kristi Allen, as we all know, a very determined advocate for health care in this province, especially when it comes to long-term supports, continuity of care. I think today was week 127 of the Monday's that she's been out in front of this building trying to bring awareness to the shortcomings, we'll say, in terms of mental health care here in the province. That's not to say supports aren't there. If you are in a health care crisis, there are supports, reach out, or if somebody knows somebody in crisis reach out to them.

But when I look at mental health care in the province – and I've presented many petitions on this and I've stood in this House many times and asked questions, we talked about the same statistics when we look at – again, the key word here is approximately. Approximately 100,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador live with mental illness. I suspect that number is higher. Because some people, because of

the stigmatism attached to it, do not declare it or do not seek help. Out of all those that are identified, only about 40 per cent of those affected by mental illness and addiction actually seek help. That's a huge number out there who are looking for help.

Within this Committee tonight we're also going to talk about education. It's interesting to note that 70 per cent – that's huge – of mental illness will develop during childhood or early adolescence. Many of those go undiagnosed. Think about that now, when you think about child psychologists in schools and that, which there's a huge shortage.

I understand that the child psychologist positions over in the Janeway, many of those are vacant. How do you solve this problem? How do you cut this problem off and make sure people are getting the help – and we've said it in this House – at the right time at the right place? We need to start dealing with that.

That goes to another statistic on this; about 20 per cent of those actually receive appropriate treatment. The emergency and short-term care, as I said, is helpful. It deals with a crisis when it occurs, but it doesn't assist when individuals need a long-term plan, some long-term care, need to be assured that their challenges are going to be addressed.

As I said, I presented many petitions in this House speaking to mental health here or the lack thereof when it comes to long-term continuity of care. It's a piece that I won't go so far as say it's ignored; I know it's not ignored. But can it be improved? Tremendously it can be improved.

It was only last week I dropped down and had a visit to the Jacob Puddister Memorial Foundation. What a wonderful building and staff there. They take in individuals who are struggling with mental health issues. In fact, I made the point here last week when I asked the question in the House, and I

stand to be corrected, but I believe they had 106 applicants within three hours. They have application times throughout the year.

What a much-needed resource for residents of the province. Just think about it; they raise their money either through fundraisers or charitable donations. They're not receiving any core funding from government. But I mean, maybe that's what we need to be looking at. I know when we looked at agencies out there, there was a discussion around ensuring these agencies that do receive funding, that they receive some funding for maybe a three-, four- or five-year period rather than every year being unsure of how they're going to go on next year. This is an area that truly needs funding.

When I met with the Association of Psychology Newfoundland and Labrador, they commented, much like I've already said, that the supports that are in place that provide quick and early access are good, but it does not provide the intensive, long-term, evidence-based therapies that many need, that is typically provided by a psychologist.

They went to say that access to longer term treatment in specialized services has not improved. About 75 per cent of psychologists mentioned that the Stepped Care approach has only minimally improved access to services. These are coming from people in the industry and people with lived experience

They also went on to speak about, as I've mentioned earlier, child psychologists, educational psychologists and they said we need to ensure psychologists in schools are there and involved in the interpretation and diagnosis of assessments. They need to be trained. When I talk about 70 per cent of those mental illnesses happening in childhood and adolescence, when you look the figures, 1.2 Canadian children are affected by mental illness – a huge number.

I've used these quotes in this House as well. It's from some of the reports that have been done. One of them being mental health and addictions issues doesn't do well on wait-lists. We all know somebody who has dealt with mental illness or mental challenges or ourselves as well. A lot of us have, at times, experienced anxiety. It could be anything. That's a form of mental illness. Some of us may have had panic attacks. That's an indication of mental illness. Some of these evolve into becoming chronic. Without the proper supports and the long-term supports, they're going to develop into a chronic issue.

As of last week, my colleague over here, with the Member for Torngat Mountains, spoke very passionately about the issues in her district, especially when it comes to suicides. Now I certainly don't know it all. I like to try and do my best to help people out. My brother, not the gentleman next to me but another brother who is heavily involved with the Canadian Mental Health Association – and this is key. When I got up in this House one time and I spoke about mental illness, I indicated so many individuals committed suicide and he let me know. He said: Paul, that's not correct. People do not get up at the start of the day and say I'm going to do away with myself today. That puts the blame on the victim.

These individuals, they die of suicide, I was corrected on. I understand that. No different than dying of any other illness. But it gives you an indication that individuals become so ill that they die. That's something we all have to be aware of and something we all have to be empathetic to. We've heard the comments before that words matter, and words certainly do matter. It's no different when we talk about education. I've sat on a number of school councils – I still do. When you talk about autistic children, and I've been corrected, no, it's children with autism. There's a proper way to address the individuals. They don't want to be identified as autistic, an autistic child. No, you identify

them as a child with autism. They are people like everyone here.

In the words we do have to be cautious of what we use; we have to be empathetic of what we use when we're talking, especially about those who are struggling with mental illness or addiction.

My file, the file I have – I have one of them here – when it comes to mental health, is pretty large. As I said, I'm learning as I go. We do our best to try and reduce the stigma attached to those with mental illness. I do find that most of the younger generation are a little bit more open about it. I think about, when you talk about mental illness, a session I did a number of years ago. The Minister of Environment was there with me; it was fire ops 101. They put us through five different drills. Some of those who were doing it never made it through the drills. These are controlled environments.

But I sat down with the firefighters. Just think about the gear they have to haul around. They talked about stress on the job, mental illness, anxiety and panic. I don't consider myself that small, but these firefighters were big people and they told me that at a time you'd never – if any first responder came into the staff room after being out and admit that you found something stressful or b'y, I don't know if I can do that. God help you if you shed a tear.

But that's changed now. That's starting to change now with good mental health supports out there. Because if you don't have those supports, where do you take it? You end up taking it home. Then you have a family life that goes in turmoil because of it.

We are making progress, there's no doubt, when it comes to mental health. I do hope to see more supports that are longer term, more supports that provide continuity of care for those in need.

When I look at, as an example, the Health Accord – and it's probably in there somewhere. You know what? I shouldn't be saying that. It's probably in there somewhere. This is only one of the appendices, but I shouldn't have to sift through that full document to find where mental health and supports are noted. That's what you have to do to try and find – now, it's probably in there covered up somewhere, I'm not saying intentionally. But I really think our mental health challenges need to be front and foremost.

I saw in the budget there's an amount allocated under mental health and most of the amount is going towards the new mental health facility and wraparound resources, as I was told in Estimates. That's all good. But it still doesn't address what we need when it comes to having proper care afterwards.

During one of the elections I met a young single mother, she had a child who had some concerns and she had indicated to me about going into the doctor, going into the Health Sciences, if you went in with a broken leg she said you'd be given a cast, you'd be given a wheelchair, maybe, crutches, off you go. Here's how to look after it, come back and see us, get the cast off, get physio and the whole works. Yet, if she went in – and she did say she went in when her child was having a crisis and they sat down for a bit and then they were given a sheet of paper with some apps and phone numbers to call. So we're a long way yet from providing the long-term continuity of care to those in need. This is just one element.

It does go back to a shortage of resources: psychiatrists and psychologists. I hear from individuals who are waiting 24 months to see a psychiatrist. So it comes down to prioritizing what you do in this province. If we're estimating conservatively that 100,000 individuals in the province are dealing with mental health challenges, that's 20 per cent of the population at minimum. I

would suspect it's probably closer to 25 or 30 per cent.

So why are we not focusing on the longer term needs of these individuals. Why are we not focusing on early interventions for those children and adolescents? Those are the ones who identify. Why do we not have the supports in our schools to help these individuals, to identify these individuals, to get them the supports? These are the questions I get asked. These are the questions people ask me to speak up on.

You know, you can talk about the Health Accord and the plan, you can talk about the Greene report and the plan, you can talk about the consultations and the like, but, at the end of the day, action speaks much louder than words. I look at the 57 or so calls to action of the Health Accord, I can argue that some of them are slotted for first year and it hasn't happened. Some were slotted for down the road and they have happened. It's a bit of a piecemeal approach from my opinion on this.

But nowhere in those action items do you see mental health mentioned. Now it may be included in community and economic well-being. It may be included in the health and wellness of the population. But I think when we look at the amount or the instance of mental health challenges in this province, then it really needs to be brought front and centre. It needs to be addressed. Only then will we really start to address the real issues around mental health in this province and ensure that people don't live under a cloud or in the dark in a room or feel they have nowhere to turn. We want to make sure that people feel the help is there for them, the supports are there for them, it's accessible at the right time, in the right place and that we support the groups out there, the non-profit charitable organizations out there that do so much for this province, yet do not have a handout. We should be supporting them with core funding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, it's a privilege and an opportunity to stand and share today. I've got some great things to talk about here in the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, as well as in the District of St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows. So a big thank you to the people of St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows who have given me the opportunity to stand and represent them in this House.

Earlier this month, or in April month, the Minister of Finance took a trip to the beautiful District of St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows and through the caribou and the snow and the slush she made her way and had the opportunity to meet with the Chamber of Commerce in the area. That's an organization that has been long standing. They've done some great work in advancing initiatives in the district and they have members there that have been there longer than I've been alive. So they've seen things come and go in the district, but they've remained solid in their intention to promote the district and to move it forward.

The minister had an opportunity to meet with those individuals and discuss some of the items that were highlighted in the budget that were relevant, discussing the debt-to-GDP ratio and how we've paid down on the debt of the province and just different pieces of conversation that were meaningful to those individuals. I certainly do appreciate the fact that she was able to make the trip.

At another meeting in the district, she had an opportunity to meet with municipal leaders in the district and highlighted some of the issues that were important to them and talked about some of the things that we've done in *Budget 2023* and how we'll continue to support municipalities, in particular, on the great Northern Peninsula.

This being Municipal Awareness Week I want to get a special shout-out to all of the communities, all of the municipalities across the province who are doing great work in their communities and how they provide services that are important to residents closest to home. There are a great number of staff and administrators and volunteers, as well as councillors and mayors, who make those things a reality for communities all across the province. To that end, we recognize the value that these entities in our communities bring to the province and I'm pleased to talk about the \$3-million increase to the Municipal Operating Grants.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: We've heard in conversations all across the province that it's been a while since there's been an increase. In their communities these days there's an increase of the responsibilities on our communities, of the expectations that we have of our communities. I think that's identified and appreciated in recognition of that with the \$3-million increase this year and the \$3-million increase next year.

We hear you, we heard the communities talk, we heard about the needs that they have. Does it go all the way to meet every need? No, definitely not, but we'll continue to hear their concerns, we'll continue to work with municipalities and we'll make sure that we do what we can to get the resources to those who provide the services to our residents.

Just a reminder to any municipalities or folks that may be listening, is that the 13.6 per cent will be applied to the September payment of the Municipal Operating Grants this session. Then next year we will reconsider how we distribute those funds.

Speaker, along with that there's \$158 million included in the budget for direct support to municipalities. For our MOGs, our Special Assistance Grants, our Community Enhancement Employment Program and

the Canada Community-Building Fund, as well as the provincial gas tax. These are programs that put an infusion of cash into communities, it gets people to work and it gets work done. We're very proud to be supporting those initiatives.

Just for a moment, I'd like to speak about our Special Assistance Grants. Those have been applied to communities all across the province. There are different levels of need, different levels of assistance required when these grants come in. But we've done things all across the board for things such as feasibility studies, for drinking water provisions, for fire equipment, and most recently we've been able to support aid and assistance to the areas impacted by Hurricane Fiona. That was a large piece of work that was undertaken by our department and the Department of Justice and Public Safety this year. We're very pleased to be able provide that type of support.

We've also had great success this year in our Building Age-Friendly Communities Grants and those things are very important to areas all across the province as well.

We've identified 137 different projects from all across the province that will meet the needs of seniors and help communities build spaces that are age-friendly, that allow easier access, that provide additional lighting to trail ways, that assist with ramps that may have been outdated or dangerous and all of these are in an effort to increase the accessibility of seniors in our communities and making life more viable and appropriate for them. We are very pleased that the program was oversubscribed by about four times. So our original budget, we were able to go back and do some math and we were able to provide more funding for those projects, seeing, very well, the work that is identified in them.

I think any time you go looking for money for communities, it's a little bit of an easy sell

because you know that towns are doing a great job of spending their money. They're very wise stewards of their cash and they do great things with the money that they have provided to them and it's easy how to figure out how to get money into their hands because they're on the ground, they're closest to the resources and they know what it is that their community needs.

So it's often easier to get money out the door to them. There's always a community with a shovel-ready project that are willing to step up and spend the money when it comes to their hands. So this initiative, in particular, was so important because it aligns with the Health Accord NL and the actions that were there to address the social determinants of health. Seniors in the capacity in which they're affected is certainly one of the largest pieces of that. We recognize that municipalities and communities can be drivers of health transformation and we want to continue supporting those efforts.

Speaker, this weekend I had the opportunity to attend the MNL symposium and there was a lot of conversation there about the code of conduct that we discussed previously in this House and it was identified as one of the biggest issues facing councils all across the province. So we are happy to be able to take that chunk of work, carve it off and get our legislation passed unanimously in this House. So I thank my colleagues for that effort.

I am pleased to report to everybody today that 100 per cent of the municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador have completed, accepted and adopted a code of conduct. So hats off to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: That gives an extra level of direction, of protection to the communities, to the councils and make sure that the decisions that are made are in the best interest of all parties. We've also had a

significant uptake in our training initiatives this year. We had 2,600 registrations in over 50 training sessions that were conducted by our department. So we're very appreciative of the importance that councils, staff and administrators are placing on their training and making sure that they are providing the services that are the most appropriate for their communities. So hats off again to them for some of the great things that they've been able to do.

Speaker, the investments in *Budget 2023* have a positive impact for residents in all of our communities and their ability to deliver the services that residents need. They work day in and day out and what they do is so important because healthy and happy municipalities are vital to ensuring the overall well-being and prosperity of our province. We work hand in hand with our municipal leaders to ensure that the resources they need are available.

In some cases, there are significant challenges to meeting those needs. We do understand and accept that challenges exist, but we do remain committed to moving forward on a path that will help communities address those changes. A part of that solution, Speaker, lies in collaboration and service sharing.

So on April 26, I outlined the next steps in the regionalization approach to advanced community sustainability and viability through collaboration and service sharing. So, for the record, regionalization is not dead. It is not dead. I believe there's a song about that somewhere. Not dead, still alive. We're still very much working on initiatives that will support communities. So you can call it what you like but at the end of the day, the end goal is to create sustainable communities that are viable and that allow residents to receive the services that are required.

So as we worked on the information that we received, a massive piece of work that came from the joint working group on

regionalization, they presented a report to us but the information within it has shown that the province's large geography, as well as a lack of population density, does not provide the necessary tax base to support an additional layer of government. In most parts of the province, this was not achievable without folding municipalities into a new structure. That was certainly not a part of our conversation or a part of our intention to make that happen.

As we move through the province and had these conversations with different representatives of different communities, this was met with disappointment by some and relief by others. So, as I've said, we want to create a model that allows for sustainability. Creating a new regional governance structure wasn't the best way to accomplish that at this point in time. So we are taking good guidance from the joint working groups report. In the report, they highlighted a potential increased role for the regional service boards, along with the recommendation of conducting community assessments.

So, as I've said, while we're not necessarily pursuing a formalized regional governance structure, we are taking steps to formalize, encourage and support regional collaboration. We wanted something that was realistic, something that made sense and something that was practical and built on the service sharing that's already occurring all across the province. Something that we can work with. If it's already working, why reinvent the wheel?

We look to the area of Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview, Colliers, Avondale and Conception Harbour for one great example of how they've come together as a community in a service-sharing agreement. I swear that I didn't pay them to say all the good things that they said at the symposium. But I am willing to pay. I'm willing to pay communities that want to come forward with initiatives that will grow a regional collaborative approach. Up to

\$500,000 is identified in the budget to address service gaps and build capacity through a collaborative, shared-services approach.

I think there may have been some miscommunication into thinking that this was just the pot of money that we've identified for infrastructure or for building new things in a regional government. But right now that money is identified for any initiative that establishes service delivery models of collaboration or meets a service gap through a regional approach.

We've also identified the need to do a self-assessment of our communities. We don't know what service gaps exist if we don't know what services are actually being provided. So we want to identify what communities are doing really well and what they may find particularly challenging, and who, if any, of their neighbours, they may be able to turn to meet those service needs. That's part of the self-assessment tool.

Now, sometimes communities may have a tendency to over-boast about what they're actually capable of. I know that when I wrote self-assessments in nursing school, nine times out of 10, I told them I was deadly. So there was room sometimes for interpretation on some of the self-assessments and we want to make sure that we have measures in place that are appropriate, that are measurable and that we can identify how communities are actually providing their services.

In the weeks to come, we'll have more information on the criteria that will be part of the self-assessments and how we will work with communities to apply for the funding that's been made available. In the meantime, we're still very interested and very keen to hear from communities who have ideas about how regionalization could be implemented in their communities.

Collaboration and service sharing is what we are attempting to use to build resilient

and sustainable communities. Speaker, we've also identified a need to have a look at the legislation surrounding the regional service boards. As with any and all legislation in this House, there is a time to review it and a time to look at it to see what's working well and to see what may be needed to be upgraded. That's an undertaking we will also take in our department.

As I said, when we're talking about collaboration and service sharing, you can pretty much call it what you like, as long as at the end of the day the goal is accomplished to create sustainable communities. We believe that collaboration and service sharing is one model that we may be able to use to address that. But we'll explore regional economic development opportunities, how we can build capacity for communities and how they can better service the residents in their areas.

There is strength in numbers, Speaker. What may be impossible for a single community can be a reality when two or more communities come together. We encourage you all to start that conversation, have those conversations in your districts and see what it is that they're doing well and how they're working well together. I know there are several examples across the way of communities that have come together and done great work. If there's an ability there for them to share a service if they want to combine their resources, if communities are interested in incorporating, these are all items that we want to have up for discussion as we move forward on a model that provides services in a more sustainable fashion for our communities.

As always, the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs will be there to support these communities. We have a great staff, we're very knowledgeable, some of it is useful and we're hoping that we can get these conversations started in our communities and we can certainly move forward on these plans.

Speaker, with that, I will take my seat. But again I'm very interested to hear what my colleagues have to say and very excited about the budget and the supports that it provides for municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another standing ovation from the other side. You got to laugh. It's all good. I say that tongue in cheek, of course, partly serious. It is a pleasure to get up, of course, and it's always nice to give a shout-out to my District of Conception Bay South. I'm not sure how many people in the district watch this, but I do believe there are some – I know there are some, actually. So a shout-out to all of them.

Like I say, it's a privilege and it's an honour every time we stand in this House to speak for your district and about issues important to your district. Education and early childhood development is part of my shadow portfolio and it's part of the assessments that we're doing there now with Social Services Committee. I'd like to thank the Minister of Education and his staff for Estimates that we did here last week, last Wednesday actually. Great job, very informative.

The minister, actually, answered a lot more questions than I give him credit for. We had anticipated that he was going to pass them off because usually, the first year in, ministers tend to defer a lot and they'll try to answer some and defer some. I spoke to that during the Estimates that night, and I'll give him credit, again. He answered pretty well the majority of all the questions. You don't see that all the time, so I commend him for it. We were kind of making bets, me and my researcher. We were wondering

how many he will answer, but he really did a great job.

Whether he gave me a correct answer, I am assuming he did but he answered them really good and I never questioned what he said. So I took it at his word. To his credit, he provided me answers and I appreciate that.

On that note, education, of course, and early childhood development are two huge issues in our province. It takes up \$1.4 million of our budget. This past year or probably this past several months – we were talking about it earlier – child care, basically the whole early childhood development file is something that, I think, is after elevating its importance in the province and its interest. It's a conversation that we're having daily now and more people are aware of this issue than ever before and the shortcomings that are out there. We've got a lot of shortcomings. We've got a shortage of spaces, shortage of ECEs and we're dealing with children with autism that are being, basically, sent home from daycares for lack of inclusion workers. It's major issues.

We deal with child care issues or childhood issues, and you call in and it was never that important. It was very important but it was never that much – you know, you went in and there was several staff would deal with it. You had to deal with two or three people and it was usually about helping child care centres get their operating grants because they were late on their payments, getting their money, waiting on their money. That's what we dealt with on a regular basis.

It wasn't the same pinch to child care that it is now. Spaces were available but it was kind of one of those things, more of an operational thing that child care operators would contact you. I'm sure, Speaker, many Members around the House probably got calls in their own districts from waiting on their operating grant, their money and that was the normal for numerous years and it's

in the last few years and, especially in the last couple of years when the child care, the provincial one and federal program, was implemented. The demand was just unprecedented. Since, the \$10-a day child care has gone through the roof.

We all knew that was coming. I think we should have known. Ten dollars a day for child care is wonderful. We've never, ever questioned it. We think it's a great initiative. Why wouldn't you? Child care is one of the single most expensive things, prior to this, that families had to endure. I remember talking to families that were paying \$1,000 or \$1,500 a month for child care. That's a lot of money. That's a mortgage on a house. So you get \$10 a day, it's great.

But it came down to planning and I suppose a lack of planning. I've been very critical of government on this one and sometimes you say with criticism – we don't always like to criticize. I know this past week in my district, I ran into someone. They're friends of mine and they made a joke: Will you stop complaining? But when they said it to me there was a grin on their face, but they quickly acknowledged I know it's what you got to do. I laughed back of course.

It's not complaining. I said just imagine if you never had the 17 Members on this side of the House to challenge government on all these issues. I think it helps government actually, because sometimes you're asking government a question, they look back sometimes – I'm sure they do, because if I was there I'd think the same thing, you've broaden their thought frames too. They're probably thinking stuff, they think they've got it figured out and they come in and sit down and they listen to questions.

Maybe they don't have it figured out. They come in and base their answers on what we're providing. We'll never get credit for that, but a lot of times I know we sit in this House and we'll stand up and we'll debate issues and we'll have our back and forth. At the end of the day, a lot of the times, I think

good decisions are made based on a lot of questions that come from this side of the House. But, again, I understand, I've been around long enough to know, there will never be a PC initiative that the Liberal government goes out in front of the microphone. But I can guarantee you, there are a lot of PC ideas that goes into a lot of their decisions, but you'll never get credit for it and that's fine.

But on this child care issue, it is a serious issue and it's not going away anytime soon. You've got thousands of spaces that we're short on. My colleague from Harbour Main read a petition. I mean, it's unbelievable. We've got people that are after leaving their jobs. You have doctors that can't go back to work. You have professionals that can't afford to go to work because they can't get child care. We've got grandparents that are burnt out trying to look after their grandchildren to let their children work.

It's so broad ranged. We've got families moving in from the other side of the province, coming in to St. John's to help their son or daughter and their children. To those people who have those supports, that's good. Not everyone got those supports. A lot of families don't have those supports. So what do they do? They stay home from work. They have no choice. You got to have someone to look after your child. That's primary. I have people selling their homes. You have people with a child with autism moving to Calgary and looking for space up in Calgary.

Now I'm only cherry picking, Speaker. All of us, collectively – I have gotten, being the shadow minister for this portfolio, more than enough. I could start reading them off but I don't want to do that. The point is every story we can tell, you could multiply that by hundreds. That's what you're dealing with.

Government, when they brought in this initiative, it was great. It was check the box. It was a good news announcement. The Minister of Health, who was the minister of

Education at the time, and the Premier, we never criticized. We were applauding the announcement too.

But I wondered then and it became apparent as time went on: How prepared were we? Because it's nice to make these announcements. Everyone likes to see a good announcement. Everybody does. Why wouldn't you? If you're in government, that's the name of the game. You like to make those positive announcements and people were happy about it. But it's never thought out.

My colleague today, our leader, he says it a lot and we say it a lot but I know he says it a lot: Are you being proactive or reactive? We find ourselves constantly reactive. Reacting after the fact is reacting. A lot of these announcements, we'll announce and then uh oh, we've never done any consultation. We never done any thought on that. Everything's done backwards. It's getting it out, getting it out, getting it out. A big announcement, get it out. You can't do that.

We're seeing that repeatedly over and over again, you get some good news. Unless you're announcing – I hate to use the word, sometimes we use it for an analogy – if you're announcing a cure for cancer, that's a big deal. The day that happens it won't be soon enough for any of us in this House or in this province. But unless you're doing something of that magnitude and that's the epitome, you're only getting a day's good news out of these announcements, or two days, then you're left with a dilemma. You're left with this dilemma in your hands.

How do you deal with this? Because that's what happens. There's probably a two-day bang. You did it last fall with all the \$500 cheques. I mean that helped with the polling period at the time. Everyone was happy for a month or so. But once that settled down, we were out \$220 million. Everyone was delighted, looking for their cheques. We've got more calls from people looking for their cheque.

But the point I'd like to make is the good news announcement don't last very long. It's very short lived. But the result of those good news announcements and the pieces you've got to pick up, that's the problem.

So we're here now, a year or two later, where are we to? Child care is a major crisis; education; teacher shortages. I mean, the NLTA has a map on their Facebook site showing outages, schools closed or places for teachers right across the province. We were talking about it earlier tonight. Where does that leave families?

Teacher shortages; recruitment plan: We haven't really got a recruitment plan. Retention plan: Something that's supposed to be worked on. We still haven't seen anything. We've being told stay tuned, it's coming. What will that entail? Will that solve the problem? Probably not.

But these are real issues you know. I spoke to Mr. Langdon, president of the NLTA, sometime ago before the House opened and he looked at me and he said we need time. At first I was trying to figure out what he was talking about. He said we need time. We need time in the classes. We need time in the schools to do our jobs.

You know, you're robbing Peter to pay Paul. So instead of having a preparation period, were losing that; instead of having a lunch break, we're losing that. They don't have time, they're doubling up. They're doing what they can to make it work because they care about the school they're in. They need help. They're crying out for help.

In the Premier's district last week we needed a student assistant to go with that child with exceptionalities. Finally, someone came on the bus. They couldn't go to school without that student assistant. So these are the issues they're dealing with. So what's the common theme? You're short on inclusion workers; you're short on ECEs; you're short on spaces; you're short on

teachers; you're short on student assistants. Common right across the board.

What's the answer? If you were proactive some of these announcements could have been implemented at the right time when you had your homework done. Some of these things are happening as a result of this labour shortage or what have you – we can't figure it out. But you've got to get ahead of the curve. You should be ahead of the curve.

I think, personally speaking, there are lots of red lights that went on. We stood in this House several years ago talking about the teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, shortages of student assistants, that's not a new thing. We know that the ECE situation and the child care space was a result of \$10-a-day child care. We know that created that crisis.

It's one after another after another and it a crisis everywhere we look. There are nursing shortages. There are doctor shortages. All of these things, they can be attributed to COVID. You can attribute it to the global economy, global problem. It's not in Newfoundland. It's across Canada. It's across the United States. That's fair enough. But the premier of Nova Scotia recruited, how many nurses this past – 130 or 140 nurses. That's a big number. How many did we recruit? Did we recruit any? Not that I'm aware of.

We have the NLTA asking: Where's our teacher recruitment plan? Where's the recruitment plan? They're coming out, crying out for it. We've got one. We're talking. We're going to have one. We're still waiting.

We have an issue down in Lab West; the Member for Lab West spoke about it. But do you know when we talk about the teacher shortage in Lab West: no, we don't have one based on the numbers. What numbers? The best number is the person who's on the

ground, that's in that school. People that are on the ground, they're the ones who know.

Mr. Speaker, as I move on into different education issues, I'm dealing with an issue in my own district now with Frank Roberts Junior High School. Last year, we did a tour of the building with the former minister and his deputy and staff. There was no cafeteria – well it was just a room with machines in it. I'm lost for the word now, but –

AN HON. MEMBER: Vending machines.

B. PETTEN: Vending machines, yeah. You forget sometimes, yeah. It was only vending machines in there. There was nowhere to sit down. You walked in, you got what you were looked for, and it was really a very limited supply, then you go to your classroom. There was another little room there; they put a wall up, it was like a half a classroom. They were going to take down the wall after and they said they'll make it into a cafeteria. You might get 20 or 30 at a time, you might; 650 students in the school. You'll have to start doing lunch breaks about 5 o'clock in the morning if you're planning – you're not doing it, that's the reality. There was another room, they were going to move a classroom there and they were going to put a portable on the back for an exercise room off the gym.

There were rats in eating packages of Clorox Wipes. That's factual. Mice running around. I have parents on top of parents on top of parents calling me, emailing me, questioning me on air quality, their child is sick with respiratory problems. They've seen rats. They've seen mice. They've seen traps. They've seen traps removed. This goes on.

I've talked to the school facilities and they've been great to deal with, but it came a point that the school is fine and then I hear the story no, it's not fine. The school is fine; no, it's not fine. Then I had teachers coming to me.

I've talked to the minister as well. I don't know the solution, I really don't know. Do you close the school? How do you deal with this? I mean, there have been sewer backups in there. They've questioned if cleanups were properly done. The list goes on. Classes are overcrowded.

I live in the metro area and CBS is one of the fastest growing areas in the province, the numbers are trending upwards. With 650 in a school that can really only take 400, you can say it can take 450. Think about that, you have 650.

That was my high school. Some of those classrooms are not designed for 35 children. They're not elementary children, they're junior high students. That's a pretty confined space to put a lot of students in.

I did a tour with the minister last year, I did a tour with the school council a week after, myself and the minister did a tour. The parents were appalled. When we did the walk-through a week later, they were like this got to be replaced. Of course, you try to work things out; you're working with the department and you're working with the district.

I wrote a letter last year, actually, asking for the school to be considered on the capital list and some immediate repairs done. A year later and it's still not – there are some things done but it's obviously not a solution. So I have obviously got to ramp that up.

Again, I've spoke to the minister and it's something that I will continue to fight for because it's important. I know everyone needs a school. I understand that. They need a new school or what they have is inadequate. But you can't have students and teachers alike in a place like this, if these complaints are real. None of us right here would like to work in those conditions and I don't think we should expect any of them to work or have to learn in those conditions. I think that's long overdue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, as I wind down my time, I guess the last thing I'll probably bring up is MUN. I know that's a favourite topic of mine and it seems like I've spent a lot of time talking about MUN. But there's so much to talk about. It's so, so much to talk about. So where do you start? When I start thinking about MUN, where do you start thinking about MUN? Where do we go?

So all the stuff that happened when the former president was let go and now we're faced with an interim president there. But what's changed? We're not hearing it in the news every day; I guess that's one good thing. But what's changed? Has anyone announced the Ode is going to be played yet? Has anyone heard that that's going to be played at any convocation ceremony this month? I haven't. We've long lobbied that. Is that going to be played? That's my question and I hope someone can hear me say this because I'm sick of saying it. It better be played. I mean, that's ridiculous that we're still at that. Why don't someone come out and say yeah, we're going to play it. Isn't that a fair statement?

MUN, to me – and the minister has agreed, I know he partially agreed. Again, he doesn't want to agree with too much I say about MUN, but we should not be interfering with the academic part of MUN, leave that to the Board of Regents. We need them cut down and the Senate cut down big time. You don't need 125 people running MUN. Forty people run this province here and this Legislature. A half a million people and we've got 125 people running MUN. I mean, sure that don't even – when I heard those numbers, I couldn't believe it.

Everyone just talks about the Senate and the Board of Regents. That's what you are looking at, 125 people. So how do you make a decision? Well, obviously, you wonder sometimes why it's in the condition it's in. That's one of the problems. It's dysfunctional. There's nothing normal about

that, Mr. Speaker. That's the first thing you do, but there are so many other things. Stability has got to be brought to the university.

One thing I'll tell you the government needs to do, and I hope they do it, I think the minister and I think government may be thinking that way and the premier may say I demonize and I weaponize MUN. Well, that's fine. I'll take the blame if need be. If it means changes tomorrow, I'll wear that no problem. If I weaponize MUN, at the end of the day, we got a better university; I think I did the right thing.

We've got to get a way that we have more input in how MUN is run. Again, I'll say it, when we're spending public money, hundreds of millions of dollars worth of public money, there's no way should we be hands off in that university when it comes to the fiscal part. I don't think we should have any input into the academic piece. I get that. But there are a lot of other parts of MUN that we, as a province and as a government, should have a lot more input into and I continue to say it.

As my seconds wind down, I hope that government will take control of MUN fiscally and I hope that MUN will take control and clean up their act and play the Ode at the next convocation.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is an honour to stand here again in this House of Assembly and speak on the budget. Right now, as we all know, this is the Social Services Committee and just for the benefit of viewers, the Social Services Committee is, essentially, asked to review

the departments and agencies that are included in the social sector.

So, basically, those are three departments – well, there are three – the Social Services Committee is one of three. So you have the Government Services and the Resource Committee, but within the Social Services Committee, just for the benefit of people watching, there are a number of departments and agencies. There's Health and Community Services; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation; Municipal and Provincial Affairs; Education, as we've just heard from the shadow minister of Education, the Member for Conception Bay South; and also included is Justice and Public Safety. I, as the shadow minister for that department, will speak upon that for the next approximately 18 minutes.

So what happens, just for the benefit of everyone, is that Estimates take place and, actually, the Justice and Public Safety Estimates occurred on April 6. It's approximately three hours and, at that time, it gives us the opportunity, as the Opposition and I was the critic or the shadow minister, to ask questions of the Justice Minister.

At that time, there were approximately 20 officials from his department that joined, I guess as witnesses, essentially, appearing with the Justice Minister to provide support to the minister in terms of the questions that we, myself and my researcher, asked. So there were a number of officials, there were deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers from Emergency Services, the courts, corporate services, Public Safety, correctional services, legal services, the departmental controller was present, a director of Policy and Strategic Planning, provincial court services, the chief of the RNC was present, the CEO of the Supreme Court, the High Sheriff of the Office of the High Sheriff, director of communications, media relations manager, manager of

budgeting and, last but not least, the minister's executive assistant.

So this process – this important process of the Estimates – took place approximately three hours and, in a general sense, it was a positive experience because at this time we get the opportunity to ask questions line by line of the expenditures that are incurred by the department.

One thing I was very pleased with and it generally showed the spirit of collaboration by the minister was that he provided the briefing binder to us in advance, which was very helpful to us because it allowed us, as we were going through all the many, many questions that we had prepared, we could become more efficient because we didn't have to ask some of the questions when the answers were provided in the binder.

So the little things are really what's important, Speaker, because that just shows a spirit of co-operation and collaboration. I think we'd all really do so much better if we took that spirit in all the work that we do. I just wanted to say that, that's the little things. But going on from that, I mean that's just a background on the actual budget process.

This is the Social Services Committee and I am talking about Justice and Public Safety. I'm going to touch on a couple of things in the approximately 15 minutes that I have.

Now, this is Sexual Exploitation Week, Speaker, so it's a very important week. I think it's very necessary and vital that I talk about the Department of Justice and Public Safety and some of the initiatives that they have done with respect to this very important issue. I'm also going to touch on some of the things that they have not done and what ought to be done.

First of all, let's start on a positive note. I have to commend the Minister of Justice for the important initiative with respect to the new sexual assault training initiative that

was put in place by the Department of Justice and Public Safety. What that initiative did, Speaker, was essentially Provincial Court judges have to have mandatory training regarding sexual assault cases.

Why is that important? It's important, Speaker, because in the past, unfortunately, there are stereotypes, there are myths that exist within our justice system and sadly within the court system that needed to be addressed. This initiative of having mandatory sexual assault training for Provincial Court judges is a very progressive and necessary initiative. I commend the minister for taking the lead and implementing this program.

Just for the purposes of those who are watching, we need to understand that there are myths and stereotypes even by judges. When a person comes before them, some judges may have old ways of thinking, Speaker, and this important initiative will actually be led by the judiciary and not really technically the Minister of Justice or the department. It will be led by the judiciary. They will be implementing the training and they are even going to have an education plan for their judges.

I think that is phenomenal, Speaker, and it needed to happen. It's an important reform. What it does is really we see that the minister has taken that opportunity to institute real change in the area of mandatory training for judges.

I'm very pleased about that. I understand that that's going to start to take place in the fall. We are going to be looking closely at that and, hopefully, we will be given updates by the minister as to how these things are progressing and we look forward to that.

Now with respect to other things which are of concern in the Department of Justice, Speaker, is with respect to the RNC workplace culture. Unfortunately, that is an area that needs immediate attention. I'm

referring in particular to the police complaints process that exists.

Now we all know that as citizens we vest enormous powers and authority in our police officers. In return, we legitimately expect that police power and authority will be used responsibly, fairly, equitably at all times and under all circumstances.

Now that's a high standard. I'll be the first to admit that is a high standard. But we have to hold our police officers to that high standard because of the authority and the power that they have. There's no question that our police officers are essentially good people doing extremely difficult work, under difficult and at times dangerous circumstances. So there's no question that I have immense respect for what they do for a living.

But, Speaker, what concerns me is the crisis of confidence and trust that exists right now with the police. I look to what we heard recently, just this past week, in terms of the many complaints that have been reported to the police. In fact, media reported that residents of the province have filed hundreds of complaints alleging police misconduct over the last decade – hundreds of complaints. What were essentially those complaints? The top ones were assault, conduct unbecoming an officer and incomplete investigations.

So, Speaker, we see this. We've heard that multiple officers had over a dozen complaints filed against them. So we have to be troubled by that and concerned. I certainly am.

Yet, the process to adjudicate these complaints, I would submit to the Speaker, that they are hidden behind closed doors. We raised this in the House of Assembly last week. When I talk about behind closed doors, Speaker, I'm talking about the internal disciplinary proceedings that are taking place for police officers. My submission to you and others had

advocated that these disciplinary hearings should be open to the public. That is definitely something that the minister needs to look at and he has the ability to do that.

The other thing that concerns me with respect to what's happening with the Justice Department is that First Voice is a very important group that is an advocacy group. They've been calling upon government since their report last fall. They instituted many recommendations. There was extensive research and work that went into this report and, basically, they are saying that the minister, although he's met with First Voice, but the conversations that have resulted from the minister have been disappointing to this group and have really not resulted in any commitment on the part of the provincial government or even any agreed upon next steps going forward.

So why is this important? It's because there needs to be public confidence restored in the police. I would say there's no question, when you have residents of this province filing hundreds of complaints alleging police conduct. This only came to light just recently, Speaker, through ATIPP, I believe.

This is a pattern of serious allegations that is very concerning to residents and to the people of this province. Even, I might add, the former RNC police chief, back in 2021, had recommended that internal disciplinary hearings for police officers be open to the public.

We are concerned about this. We need to look at having public confidence restored in the police. I would submit that that is not the case. I want to talk a little bit about these kind of internal processes because when we look at the police complaints, when they're filed by citizens, I think we need to revamp the whole police complaint's process.

When we look at making a complaint against a police officer what does a citizen do, what does a resident do? We need to look at how that person is treated. How is

that person received by the department? How does the public perceive police openness and willingness to receive feedback and criticism? We need to examine, from the public's perspective, how they view the complaints process, because it's clearly not working. We see that, it's clearly not working. We have a pattern of serious allegations, very concerning to residents and the people of the province. Yet, there doesn't seem to be very much forthcoming from the minister when this was raised in the House by me just last week.

We need to see, we need to have a process where the public needs to feel that they can go to the police if they have a problem with the police. If they've been assaulted, if there's been conduct unbecoming an officer, if there's been other misconduct by the police.

We need to ask the public: Do you have faith in the way that your law enforcement agency is investigating wrongdoing by its officers? I am so concerned because I fear that the answer to that question is not one we would want to hear. I really don't think it would be. Does the public trust this process? Certainly, with all these serious allegations over a period of a decade – hundreds of complaints filed alleging police misconduct. We have to get to the bottom of this and the minister has a responsibility to do that.

When a police agency or when a police force fails to adequately police itself, what other options are available? We need to look at that to root out and correct the behaviour or the misbehaviour. We need to get to it. We can't just sugar-coat it or sweep it under the rug. We need to get to the bottom of it. This is a serious pattern here that we have a responsibility to look into and the minister does.

We need to also ask is a law enforcement agency ever really capable of investigating itself, Speaker? We've heard it before, when

the police police themselves. How can the police really police themselves?

Well, we know that right now in our province there are two bodies that have civilians involved. The Public Complaints Commission is led by a civilian and then we have SIRT, the Serious Incident Response Team. We have two organizations.

But, Speaker, we need to, in accordance with what the important group of First Voices advocate, we need to have a civilian police oversight board. That is one of their recommendations, yet the minister doesn't seem to be engaging with this group. I'm not sure why that is. I mean, this group has done amazing, incredible research and documented evidence based research into this issue of police oversight and governance. Yet, the minister is not truly engaged. He met with them once but they're not satisfied.

Speaker, they are very important. They have done wonderful work and their recommendation – one of the most important recommendations that they have put forward – is that there be a civilian police oversight board. It's in other jurisdictions in the country. It's in other jurisdictions and it's received well. So we think that needs to be looked at because if there are concerns of sexism, patriarchal attitudes within our police force, if we've got repeated evidence of pattern over the last decade of these complaints by people, we need to look at this.

First Voice has repeated their call once again for a civilian police oversight board. This was their position many months ago, but action is urgently needed now. So we're just asking that the minister reach out and speak with them and engage. You can only benefit; everyone will benefit. When we have trust and confidence in our police, not only do we, as the citizens, benefit but the police benefit because they have such hard work to do and it will be even made harder if

they don't have the confidence of the people that they serve.

So we really need to look at that, establishing a civilian police oversight board, or at least sitting down with this important group and learning more about what they have, the knowledge and the expertise that they have acquired on this very important issue when it comes to police accountability and police governance and police oversight.

I see that I'm almost out of time, but I thank you very much. I'll have more to say about this as our budget debate continues over the next week.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Penny-wise, pound foolish, a stitch in time saves nine; choose whatever aphorism you want, Speaker, and certainly it's clear that there's a kernel of truth, a lesson, that could be applied to some of the areas in this section in the social sector.

I've heard here on a number of occasions, I guess, with regards to: well, we're not hearing the issues that you're bringing forward. I didn't hear these concerns. I heard them today in Estimates this morning in Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture and I heard it as a teacher. I've heard also the notion of an open-door policy. Open-door policies work if indeed the people feel that they have the power to actually walk across the threshold and speak to you about the issues.

I often think that, basically, failing to address the small things often end up costing us a lot more and I look at zero-based budgeting as an example of this. In many cases, I

can't help but think that we're rolling the dice and hoping for the best.

I'll give you a few examples of this. Holy Heart high school, where I taught, I don't know how many years, Speaker, I would constantly send in notices to the school district for summer works, invariably to fix the ceiling in the cloakroom in my classroom, which would, annually, several times in the year, leak an awful lot of water. Now, the school district was notified of this.

It was never priority until one January, exam week, when I walked into my classroom and the ceiling was down. Not only was the ceiling down but the ceiling was down in the third, second and the basement floor. That much water had come in through the ice buildup and for a while it looked as if the school – inspectors came in – was just going to be closed, not closed temporarily, but closed. There was an awful lot of scrambling at that point on the part of the district to try to come up with some arrangement where they could fix it.

I say that because no doubt, the minor repairs didn't fit into the budget beforehand, they would get around to it. It was not a priority. As a result, it cost them a greater amount to fix it, not only that but having to shut the school down for several weeks.

I think in some cases that what happened then is no different than what's happening now in our school system, in that it does take ads from the Teachers' Association to drive the point home that there's a problem. Yet, we have a denial on the other side.

I can think also between 2013 and 2017, Mount Pearl Senior High, two weeks before school began, the windows were removed from the building; part of the summer works project. Two weeks before school began, no windows in the building. Their response was oops. School's starting and every window was boarded up with plywood. From my point of view, that's a fire hazard in itself. So

what they ended up doing was cutting out little holes and sealing it up with plexiglass.

Now I can't think in some ways about how – well, the best way I can describe it is inept – but how that impacted students, especially at the time of the year when it's going to get very cold shortly.

Exploits Valley High, I remember that school, too, the same thing: school began, no heaters in the classroom. The radiators were not working because of electrical work. Instead, what was the company working on? Getting the library ready. It was basically the principal who had to point out: No, we need the classrooms up and running first before the library. But the amount of money that was spent that time on change orders to get things done because they failed to consult teachers was enormous.

I remember speaking to the Premier at the time about basically having a penalty on the contractors for failing to get the work done. His comment to me at that time was: Well, they probably got that penalty built into the price in the bid they submit. It seemed like case after case, school after school, it was the school community – the teachers, the students and the staff – who paid the price for it.

But let's take that a little bit further. Deaf education, it basically took the threat of a human rights case, Speaker, to get the district and the department to act. Now I sat in on the testimony and it was very clear that teachers had brought the solution to their attention time after time to have it ignored. I can't help but think in terms of having to listen to what the teachers, the educational staff, were saying from the get-go would have saved the anguish of a family watching their child struggle and be isolated in a school system and would've saved the system a lot more; a simple solution, a stitch in time.

I will tell you my colleague, my brother from Topsail - Paradise, basically said it clear

about mental health in the school system. I can tell you in the primary system that's where you're seeing it. I would tell you that from my time as a teacher, if there's going to be a case of – most of the stories I heard of violence, student violence, was basically in the primary and elementary school, not in the high school. I saw precious little of it, unless it was up in the school parking lot. But they took their problems outside; you didn't see it this much in the classroom, but in the primary and elementary you did. Primarily because children at that age didn't have the self-regulation that they develop or that socialized into them later. Yet, we persist in putting them in large classes. I will argue that classes of 25 and 28 in Grades 1 to 3 and Grades 4 to 6 is just too much.

I would talk to more than one school counsellor that was in elementary school, they were already dealing with children who already had suicidal ideation. Now think about that, elementary, Grades 4 to 6. That's significant.

Children who come home from school with headaches daily because of the noise in the classroom, usually because there are children there who are in need of more concerns.

I can tell you also, any school I visited, I could pretty well pick out where the challenging needs or the special education room was. It was usually the smallest. It usually had no windows and, in some cases, it was a closet that was converted to a classroom.

I think, in many cases, maybe that's a case of saving money but down the long run it's going to have repercussions. I would argue that for the most part a lot of the issues that become major problems are issues that teachers have brought forward to have them ignored, or if the union brings them forward they're dismissed until it becomes a problem or until there's a public relations campaign that embarrasses government into action.

I can think of one school, Coley's Point, I remember that school had won an award for its inclusive education, recognized for its inclusive education practices. The following year they had an influx of students with needs without the necessary resources to help the students and the teachers were overwhelmed. They were doing some fantastic stuff the year before with the resources they had. They were making it work.

My colleague from Conception Bay South brought up Frank Roberts. Well, I've got emails here from teachers and that with regard to the issues in the school. It's a 54-year-old school, not too bad; Holy Heart is older than that. But at the same time, a lot of money was put into it; it actually works. But everything from an inadequate or non-existing cafeteria, a gymnasium that sometime is double booked, to rodents.

In some schools the solution was remove the rodent traps during parent-teacher night because we didn't want the parents to see it. That was coming down from above; that's the solution. Leaks, walls that shake with the wind, you name it. At some point, how long more will it take to replace a school, to make it safe for people, for the people who teach there, for the people who learn there, for the parents who come there?

Now it's interesting because the irony in a lot of this is that I've heard government here speak about health delivery in this province and how it cannot just be based on population. It cannot be per capita, a formula. We must look at the demographics and geography and all the other factors. Do you know what? That's what we've been asking for. I was asking for that when I was president of the Teachers' Association. The Teachers' Association is still asking for it now; teachers have been asking for it. When it comes to class size, just don't make it a numbers game. We're still waiting.

I don't know how many heart-wrenching stories of newcomers where they come into

a school and the classes are well overloaded. Again, I remind you, kindergarten, 20 is the cap; Grades 1 to 3, 25; Grades 4 to 6, 28; Grades 7 to 9, 31 in Grades 7 to 9. I challenge you to try that sometime. That's significant at the junior high level. I challenge you; any of the teachers here will know exactly what I'm talking about. You'll be more exhausted at the end of an hour than you will be your whole day here. That much I will tell you.

The schools that have newcomers often will say that they show up unannounced and then they leave. The schools become a holding ground. There is a lack of translation services, EAL, English as an Additional Language needs to be beefed up and all the while teachers are trying to make do and trying to make sure that the students in their care receive the education and the attention and the emotional support in all of that.

But teachers have been saying that and those in the school system have been saying that, but when they're coming to an Opposition Member, the fact is they do not feel listened to by the district nor the department.

Now, on top of that, what was announced last budget – well, actually, before that – was the amalgamation of the school district and what I have yet to hear in any of the questions I've asked: Was there a cost-benefit analysis? I have vivid memories of the amalgamation in 2013. A lot of teachers do. It was chaotic. It was ill planned. There was no clear goal. I don't know if we saved any money but I've yet to hear in this: What is the plan? I have yet to hear of a plan. What was the cost-benefit analysis in making this decision? What was government hoping to accomplish? What will be the measurable outcomes? How is it proceeding? I've yet to hear that. I've heard that there's a plan but it's not yet approved. There are legislative changes over time. Somewhere along the line I do believe that the teachers, the staff, the support staff, the

students, the parents who depend on this system deserve that so that there's a clear path forward. Show us the plan.

On top of that, we have the announcement of a new school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. Now, in the meantime, I would argue that if a community deserves a new school it would be Conception Bay South, Frank Roberts; it would be Paradise where the numbers warrant it, but I cannot believe for one minute, and this is the part that troubles me with the whole new school, what's going to be the effect on PWC and on the new school when it comes to programming.

So PWC has a population of 624. It will affect the allocation of school counsellors, learning resource teachers, you name it, of the programs that are going to be offered. Unless, of course, what I'm being told is that the same teaching staff will be available in both schools and the programs will be maintained. But I haven't heard that, except, well demographics change.

We're playing with fire here and I think it's going to have consequences that we're not prepared for, similar to when you look at the consequences that we've seen, whether it was with Carter Churchill, whether it's with just maintenance and so on and so forth. But I'd dearly love to see a plan that would give me confidence that actually this is going to be better for everyone.

Housing, I'm going to finish up with a few things here. Here is the dashboard from End Homelessness St. John's. It's increased to 263 individuals who are experiencing homelessness in March 2023. That's a 9.74 per cent increase. That's an almost 10 per cent increase; 167 individuals are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Two years ago, I think it was, the first time I was dealing with people who chose to live in Pippy Park because they refused to go to the shelter system, it was too unsafe. I've got basically a daughter and a mother who

were being told that it's unsafe for the daughter to go to this shelter.

This is not something new. I know money has been announced, but somewhere along the line we've got to get moving on this and hopefully within a year have this solved, or less. But, right now, if you look at the chart, since April 2022, the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness has increased from 99 in April 2022 to 167 in March. That is unacceptable. That is a cost.

I'll end here with one, dental and health care. A stitch in time saves nine. I've been pushing here that the government fill the gap until the federal planning kicks in. But here it is, here are the numbers of people who visited the emergency department with dental gum problems. Think about that, they visited the emergency ward with dental gum problems. I guess they didn't have a dentist.

In Eastern Health, between 2018 and 2022, 12,273 people visited the emergency rooms because of that; Central Health, the number was 3,974; Western Health, 4,439; Labrador-Grenfell, 740; for a total of, in that time, 21,426 people.

Tell me at some point that it's more cost efficient. If we're looking at the budget line, if we're just looking at a budget line, forget the human misery and other health complications, the isolation, but tell me that it's cheaper to have people go into an emergency room when a simple visit to a dentist, whether it to have a filling, a cleaning, a tooth extraction, tell me it's more expensive than that. I somehow doubt it. I would say there are probably people here who've visited several times. They should not have to go to the emergency room for a dental problem.

AN HON. MEMBER: Some didn't go and suffered in pain.

J. DINN: That's right. Some didn't go and suffered the pain. I've worked with them, they are in pain. People who've gone

through chemotherapy and have lost their teeth.

So at some point, I think when we look at the budget, if it's strictly about zero-based budgeting, if it's about making sure that we look after the bottom line, then I will argue, if you take the human piece out of it, Speaker, if that's where we're going with it – I can't – but if we're taking the human piece out and looking at dollars and cents, then it's cheaper to pay for people for a dentist trip because that's one less person waiting in the emergency room. That's one less person probably taking services away from someone who needs it. So if we're going to look at the budget, let's look at it penny-wise or pound foolish, but let's be proactive and let's be sensible about this.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): Thank you.

The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Being a part of the Social Services Committee I find to be a very responsible position and I take it very seriously, but my focus is mostly for CSSD. While we have many other very competent shadow Cabinet ministers in our other sectors, I feel that being able to stand in my place and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, and consequently all the constituents in our fine province, that we need to make sure that we're doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do.

I'll touch on a few towers there, I guess. The first one I'd like to talk about is obviously seniors. It's something that's very important to me. I look at the fact that our fixed income and what came out of the budget process for me was that they got a 5 per cent increase, but, at the time, inflation was at 5.2 per cent. I think it's actually at 7.4 per

cent now, so I'm not sure how that was able to really assist. What I suggested before and I've done it in several Estimates is that we start looking at benefits and some way of trying to figure out how our seniors can have benefits on their eyes, ears, their mouth and their feet because these are predominantly the parts of their body that are breaking down quicker or more often and they're very expensive to treat.

Like I said, I mean one hearing aid is \$2,500. If you don't have insurance, \$2,500 is an awful lot of money to come up with on a fixed income. I would like to see somehow that we could get benefits for our seniors.

Talking about seniors' fixed income, I notice that in working with the minister and the town council in Marystown, they've been very inconvenienced by the Canning Bridge being taken out of service. Like I said, I'm working with the minister now to see what we can do about getting a taxi program or a GoBus or something like that in place so that we can alleviate the extra costs that are coming to the people that are on fixed incomes and that would include seniors and mostly persons with disabilities. Our children are vulnerable as well but they already use the public bus system to get back and forth to school as to what they would be utilizing any kind of public system for.

So we have transportation bus passes and stuff like that here in the city, but that doesn't go very far for the lady that is in Arnold's Cove that has an appointment in Clarendville. That service is just not available. So she has to find her own way. She's not subsidized in any way or he, I guess, it could work both ways for male and female, but in the meantime, if there's a solution for what's going on in the metro area or urban area, then I think that we should focus on something that can be done to alleviate these extra costs and extra stresses that are put on people with fixed incomes.

One of the things that has come to my attention recently, and this is to do with seniors as well, is that defibrillators are not mandatory in our long-term care homes. I find that to be really a setback that we haven't thought about that already to be quite honest. They're mandatory in hockey arenas because we know there are fellows like myself that are not in the best of shape, that are still hanging on to the dream, I guess, kind of thing, and they want to go out and play hockey and stuff. But we notice that there are some episodes that happen when there is too much physical activity for people that are not necessarily in shape but they could also have a faulty heart or something like that; we make it mandatory now to have defibrillators in our hockey arenas.

Whereas, I feel that our hockey arenas are not housed or have got people in them 24-7, whereas our long-term care homes are and these are the most vulnerable people that would be presenting with heart conditions and stuff like that. So I think it would be something that we can look at for the future to make sure that we make that initiative – that there are defibrillators in all nursing and long-term care homes.

The next thing I'd like to touch on is the persons with disabilities. One of the things that has come out of Estimates for me in the last couple of years is that we see how the Child and Youth Advocate has been working so well. We see how well the new Seniors' Advocate has taken on her role. I would like to continue to push for a disabilities advocate that I think would be a hybrid of the policy office we have in place for the Seniors' Advocate and the personal care office that we have in place for the Child and Youth Advocate. Because if somebody with a disability is calling, then instead of having them go to a bunch of different places, the disabilities advocate would be able to house most of the information and be able to help them with that. So I think a disabilities advocate is certainly somewhere where the province

needs to go and it'll be quite beneficial to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

Again, the cost of living, most persons with disabilities are on a fixed income and, like I said, they have some different health presentations than what we recognize ourselves, but the thing is, financially, it's hard to be prepared for any of these anomalies. Like I said, when we look at persons with disabilities, I'd really like to make sure that we're not marginalizing them further and really focus on employment opportunities because they are very proud people and want to work and it gives us an opportunity to give them that opportunity.

I would like to touch on housing. I think the biggest thing that came out of this year's budget for me was that yes, we were going to start 800 new housing options for low-income housing, but there's a major current need and with having so many as just over 200 – I think it's over 200 – vacant units, then I think the turnover needs to come a little bit quicker.

In my personal consultations with some people that I know in this kind of industry, it might be better off at this point for us to contract it out because we know that it will get done in a more timely fashion. Like I said, I think we've already asked a little bit too much of our employees from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing because, right now, currently, even on the Burin Peninsula, there are that many vacancies that we have two people that are taking care of from Point May right to Terrenceville. So that's a little difficult because if you go down to put a door in somewhere, in a housing unit or something like that, that's a whole day. So you're certainly not going to get to both ends of the area that you cover all in that one amount of time.

Like I said, contracting out and taking care of that turnover is vitally important because starting new units without taking care of the

assets that we already have, kind of seems to be the wrong road to head down.

The next thing I'd like to touch on is Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. I know that the minister spoke today and said that Conservatives don't support the arts and stuff like that. Nothing could be further from the truth. I've been involved in the arts myself for a long time. I had a stint there on *Republic of Doyle* for four seasons. It was very vibrant. It was a very vibrant show and it certainly a bucket-list item. When you look the part, I guess, you keep getting asked back.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DWYER: I worked in the prison, I was a prison guard. It was about continuity of character and stuff like that.

Like I said, I kept the same hair cut for four years and all that kind of stuff.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I just want to remind the Member, Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation is in the Resource Committee and, right now, we're on the Social Services Committee.

J. DWYER: Okay, that's fine.

I'll address that at another time.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

J. DWYER: In the meantime, I do want to say that we do appreciate the vibrant arts community.

In conclusion, I'm just going to go 10 minutes because I know everybody wants to get up and have a say. I've been saying this for a while, and I really hope it sinks in sooner rather than later, but we need to start looking at education and health care as an investment versus a cost. I think the thing with those two initiatives is that it's an investment in our own people. I think that's

where the money from government should be spent, is investing in our own people.

Like I said, there are many issues of health care, too many to go into this evening, and the same with education, but I would like to see more assistance and more support staff in both hospitals and schools.

With that being said, I just want to reiterate that I think my thing for everybody is that we need to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do in behalf of the people of the province, not because there's camera on us or anything like that.

I just want to say, Speaker, that it's a great honour again to be here and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to spend a few minutes to speak on the Social Services Committee and the departments that are underneath it. Health is the first one that I'll speak about because it's such a major issue out in the Humber - Bay of Islands, Corner Brook area, and the Humber Valley area also.

The problem with that are nurse practitioners. I asked a question last week to the minister about allowing the nurse practitioners to bill directly to MCP. The answer I got from the minister is that he wants to prop up the public health system first. That is an admirable thing to do. But the question, Mr. Speaker, for the minister is there are nurse practitioners out on the West Coast who are doing this in the evenings and on the weekends. It's very easy for them to allow those nurse practitioners who are working with the

Health Authority to be able to bill MCP so seniors don't have to pay their \$50, \$60, \$75.

There's absolutely no one asking the minister to say let's take people out of the health care system, the nurse practitioners and help them set up businesses. There's no one asking that. There's absolutely nobody asking that.

So when the minister gets a chance to respond, I'd like for the minister just to think about that part of having the nurse practitioners be able to bill MCP if they're in private practice. The seniors don't have to pay them. Not just seniors, other people too, but mainly seniors got to walk in. I get many calls and I'm sure the Member for Corner Brook, and I know the Member for Humber - St. George's gets a lot of calls also on it because they're all the same constituents.

So that's one part on the health that I'd like for the minister to try to address because his answer the other day was more or less saying that, okay, we've got to prop up our public health care before we can allow that. But we can do both the same time. We can do both.

I know the Minister of Finance says give us some suggestions. That's a suggestion there that I'm offering now. That's what they're asking, too. They're not asking to leave Western Health to help us set up; they're not asking that. They're definitely not asking that.

P. LANE: They're already doing it.

E. JOYCE: They're already doing it.

There's a way we can do it and there's a way we can help them, to help them with the rent. The end result of that is going to be seniors and a lot of other people – not just seniors, mainly seniors – be able to get their services done and not be charged \$50, \$60 a visit. Also, that would take off a big weight load and big wait-list for the emergency

rooms, as an example there, I say to the minister.

The next thing I'm going to just talk about for a few minutes is education. People talking about the new school up in Conception Bay South, is it? I only have one question on all that. I never saw any details. But the information that came out, that was never, ever recommended; never, ever discussed with the school board. Never discussed.

We heard the Minister of Health, now, in a question that was asked in the media, what he said was: Oh, we noticed that in infrastructure, so we decided in infrastructure. I'm missing something here. How would you be able to discuss a project in infrastructure when it wasn't even recommended to infrastructure?

I'm not saying the school is needed or not. I know the disruption it's going to cause, the trickle-down effect to other schools because I spoke to some parents. But the question is – and this goes to the heart of government – if government sets up a process to have infrastructure of \$25 million to \$30 million, shouldn't you follow the process? All of a sudden, oh, we want a school up in CBS, let's build it. Forget about the recommendations from the school board, forget about that. Forget about the other students that may now be disrupted. Forget about the two or three schools that are going to be half-full and now you have to come up with the resources. Forget about all that; let's just build that school and saying that it was done after we looked at it in infrastructure. That's just not the way the infrastructure works. Believe me, I've been there. That just doesn't work.

I want to bring that up as a thing for government when you talk about how to build confidence and trust. That's one way not to build confidence and trust. When the trickle-down effect starts in the St. John's area, you're going to hear a lot more about it. When it gets closer you're going to find

out that half the schools are going to be half-full, this school's half-full. Now they have to try and say, okay, we haven't got all the resources here. We haven't got it all in this school. That's when it's going to work.

If you have a policy set-up you should follow it, not have the school board write and say: What in the hell is all this about? What is this about? Where did this come from? That was the email, Tony Stack. Oh, sorry, the CEO of the school board. Sorry, I don't want to be shut down again tonight.

The other thing I'm going to speak about, something on the process, is Municipal Affairs. I say to the minister, regionalization is a big part and it's hard to do. So my only suggestion on that to the minister is try to stick with it because there are some towns that would like to do it, if there are good incentives in it. It's a tough one because people don't want to lose their identity.

I go back to the '90s now when Irishtown-Summerside was thinking about being amalgamated. I remember the mayor at the time; they had a big rally and asked me to come over to the rally. I went over to the rally and they asked me to do something; I wouldn't do it. They were going around the town with a casket asking me to get in the casket, because the death of their community. But that's how personal it gets for people.

So I say to the minister, I know there are some disappointed people out there, but my suggestion, and I know out my way, also, is don't give up. There may be towns that can do it, that can with some good incentives come together. I always use the example of Humber Arm South. There were four communities: Frenchman's Cove, John's Beach, Benoit's Cove and Halfway Point that came together back in '73, '74. One of the most prosperous towns in the province; four communities combined back then on their own. One of the most prosperous towns in the province bar none. That's just a

suggestion to the minister and a bit of encouragement to the minister on that.

The next one I'm going to bring up is Children, Seniors and Social Development with the minister. I said it before and I'll say it again, the minister is very responsive and very open to suggestions. I thank the minister for that. But there's one issue in Corner Brook, the housing part. I mentioned to you before up in that area of Corner Brook, there's a unit there about 50 or 60 units, if you can ask someone to look into that. It's going to need a lot of repairs, but there is a –

J. ABBOTT: We have a plan.

E. JOYCE: Pardon me? Got a plan?

Well, I'm hoping, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'll go with you. If you want to go out and present a plan, I'll go with you. I'll support you on it and I'll say how much it's going to mean to the area for the people. So I bring that to your attention also, I brought it to you before and I know you helped out with the emergency funding for housing for 75 or 80 people who were living on the streets just a few months ago. I have to commend you on that, also, for acting on that.

But if you've got a plan for that unit, let's go out and make that announcement. Let's get it moving. I'll be the biggest cheerleader you've got on that because to help out 60 families to find housing, it is well worth it I'll say to the minister. I look forward to hearing what your plan is. Hopefully it's going to be done this summer so we have another 60 units before next winter so people won't be surfing on couches and living at the hotels in Corner Brook. I thank the minister for that.

The next one I'm going to bring up is Justice and Public Safety. The only thing I'll bring up on their department is I can't go by without recognizing the first responders in the Province of Newfoundland and

Labrador. It's just not in my area, I think everybody in the areas of St. John's, Corner Brook and other areas have paid firefighters. But there are 5,500 volunteer firefighters in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I noticed the minister has increased funding for equipment for them and we've got to recognize that.

The sad part about it, Mr. Speaker, before when you hear about the Fire Fighters' Association – now over 90 per cent of calls are medical; ask any volunteer firefighter unit in Newfoundland and Labrador, they are medical. I'm just going to make a suggestion to the minister somehow, and that may be in conjunction with the Minister of Health: It's nice to get the equipment, it's nice to get a fire truck, fire hose and bunker suits, but is there any way that we can find some way to put some money through the Department of Justice and Public Safety for medical training for the first responders?

That is something we need, medical training. Equipment is great but when you've got 90 per cent of the calls, they need defibrillators. They need training for advanced paramedic. They need the training. Some of them are paramedics; they want to be advanced paramedics. We need the training because some of them are a long ways away from the hospital. So I'll just bring that up, also, because equipment is one thing, but when 90 per cent of your calls – what's more important is the medical training and the medical supplies that they need.

So I say to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, if there's some way we can get some medical training funds put into your department so that we can train the firefighters who over 90 per cent of the calls are for medical, I think that would be another great step to alleviate the concerns of a lot of people where their ambulances are far away. Because they are dedicated, they are willing to help, but if we can help them, that's going to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'll take my seat, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to throw out a few suggestions and a few ideas to the government on these departments. I look forward to some positive results.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to take a couple of minutes. I'm not going to delve into all the departments because I've talked about the issues around health, the doctor shortage; issues around child care and so on. I've talked about them numerous times so I'm not going to repeat that tonight.

I did want to bring up Municipal Affairs because something I haven't talked about much and, quite frankly, when it comes to the Department of Municipal Affairs and the same with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, there's not a big lot of involvement with my district per se.

The City of St. John's and the City of Mount Pearl, they're pretty much self-sufficient. They do have some involvement with Municipal Affairs but certainly not to the degree that a lot of the smaller towns would on day-to-day issues and trying to solve problems and so on. It's not something that comes up a bit lot but I did want to bring it up.

First of all, because this is Municipal Awareness Week, I did want to just throw out, I guess, a bouquet, certainly, to the two municipalities which I represent, that being St. John's and Mount Pearl and the tremendous job that the councils and all the city workers and so on are doing to make our two communities such a great place to live and raise a family.

I did have the opportunity to attend the Municipal Symposium in Gander over the

weekend. It was great to get out there and see so many former colleagues and friends. I spent eight years on Mount Pearl city council, myself, as a councillor and deputy mayor. I also served as Avalon director with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. So, certainly, no stranger to that event and to many of the people involved, although, like anything, people change, new people come in, but there are a lot of people who are still there and have been there a very, very long time. So it was great to catch up.

I know that on the topic of regionalization, I can say that there was a mixed bag amongst people that attended. I know that there are some people who were a little bit, I'll use the word, disappointed that the announcement came around regionalizing, about not continuing on as is.

That announcement kind of came and what I heard certainly on the first evening was, we didn't know anything about it. There was no advance notice. We heard about it on the news and so on. They were a little disappointed about that.

But in terms of the actual announcement itself, depending on who you asked, there were some towns who were disappointed. I talked to a number of towns that even though they were part of MNL, they weren't from Local Service Districts because we know that's where much of the pushback came from, but even people who were there that were part of towns and so on, there was an awful lot of delegates I spoke to, who said that, well, secretly we're kind of glad that this decision happened. Even though openly everybody kind of agreed with it but a number of people I spoke to said they felt like that agenda was being pushed perhaps by the executive, by the board and by some of the more vocal people within MNL and a lot of people kind of went along with it, so to speak, but they weren't really truly on board. So that was some of the feedback I received from a number of people is we're actually glad this

is not happening because we didn't really agree with it to begin with.

I think the problem is and when it comes to – this is not an easy issue. It is very complex, there's no doubt. I can understand why it was determined it couldn't work. If you're going to get communities to come together – and there's nothing wrong with communities coming together to share services and to operate. Despite some of the, I guess, media hype over the years and so on, for example, between St. John's and Mount Pearl and that sort of rivalry, if you will, the reality of it is that the City of St. John's and the City of Mount Pearl work very well together. They share a number of services.

We share regional fire services, regional water, waste water, the regional waste management and Metrobus – I guess we are more of a customer of Metrobus, GoBus. The City of Mount Pearl also shares animal control services with the Town of Paradise. So there actually is a lot of co-operation going on between those three municipalities and I would say even throughout the region. I think you can include, to a lesser extent, but there is still a lot of dialogue and sharing of information and working together with like the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and Torbay and Conception Bay South and so on. So everybody already works together as a region, various programs and services, where it makes sense.

But I think if you're going to make something like this work, a, it has to be voluntary; b, there has to be a common problem that the municipalities involved share that they're trying to solve together; or c, there has to be some sort of a benefit to all of those involved. If you don't have those factors involved, it's just not going to work.

So that's why when we talked about this regional authority, another layer of bureaucracy if you will, that's why you were getting pushback, particularly from LSDs

and so on. The smaller towns in more isolated areas would say okay, so I start paying \$300 a year for argument sake – if that's the number, I don't know what the number would be – but I'm not paying now, what am I getting for that service? Because right now in the wintertime the roads get done. Right now my garbage is collected. It might be some person with a pickup truck as opposed to a big, large truck, but it's being collected. I'm paying for that service and my garbage collection is done. Whatever other services that I need, that I want, that I'm willing to pay for, I'm getting.

So by being part of this larger entity and now paying this money, what else am I getting for that money? Part of the problem was nobody could actually say then well, you're going to get a, b and c for that money. The bottom line is that if you're not going to get anything for it, then there's no benefit to you for being involved. So that was part of the problem.

Of course, if you're a large municipality, perhaps if there are smaller ones around you, there might be some opportunity where they could tag on to certain services, pay a fee for it, where it works. But in saying that, you also cannot have a situation whereby the larger municipality is now forced to subsidize. So now I'm a taxpayer in a large municipality, now I've got to take my tax dollars to subsidize small communities around me. You're not going to get buy-in from taxpayers to do that either.

So I think the best we can hope for is to have situations where we will find clusters of municipalities – that could be two neighbouring municipalities, it could be three, it could be four, it could be 10 – whereby for certain services, they can agree that this is something that we can all do together and it's something that everybody gets a benefit for, we all share the cost equally and everybody benefits. I think there are lots of things you could do where that could work.

I know with regional waste management there were challenges with that, even with the cabin country. But still, in speaking with Eastern Waste over the years, one of the things they were looking at and I had some conversation on is putting on a menu of services. For example, they said, on the Southern Shore, which was involved in it, why not say to the Southern Shore, listen, if you want animal control, for argument's sake, here's a menu of services. Let's say five or six of those towns say we want animal control. They all tick it off. Now we have enough to do animal control, okay, what's the cost of an animal control officer and everything. Share the cost six ways and there you go. If someone else wants to sign up now we have a seventh, now everyone's cost goes down.

You can't force the community – there might be two here and they skip one because they say we don't want to be part of it, you can't force them to do it. But as long as there are enough people wanting to pay into the system to offer certain services, fine. I may sign up for animal control but I may not be interested in municipal enforcement. I may be interested in someone to look after our water supply, someone to do our waste water and so on. I think you have to look at it on a case-by-case basis in various regions and it has to be a voluntary program where you encourage towns who can come together where there is a mutual benefit and where there is indeed an equally shared cost where it makes sense for them to get involved and leave the option open to others. If you don't want to be part of this right now, that's perfectly fine. If you want to sign on at a later date and pay your fair share, that's fine as well. But you can't expect to have the services if you're not paying for the services.

I think that's the only direction, to my mind at least, that's truly going to work that I think you're going to get buy-in for. I think it seems to me that may be the direction the government is now looking. I would certainly support that.

But other than that, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot I could speak about, but the time is starting to wind down. I've spoken about these other departments numerous times. I'm going to take my seat so we can move on to vote for the Concurrence.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, the motion is that the Report of the Social Services Committee be concurred in.

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 passed.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call the Concurrence Motion Report of the Resource Committee.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm not going to use up all my time, but I'm going to aim for the 10-minute mark as well.

I'd, first of all, like to pay tribute to a fisheries voice that has gone silent over the weekend and that was with the passing of Gus Etchegary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I think David Vardy coined it right. Dave referred to Mr. Etchegary as a titan, a tectonic force within the fishing industry. He was a voice that cried out quite often for the rebuilding of our depleted fish stocks and the revitalization of our fishing industry.

In the later years, he advocated for better science and better management. He'll be sadly missed. The challenge now is that other voices would rise up and continue on with what he had advocated for within the fishery, to make sure that we do increase our resources that are within our ocean economy.

We had Estimates this morning and we went over a whole host of things with the minister and had a good engagement back and forth. We got updated on the current fishery situation. I know that we had the fish pricing panel, but I know a lot of people look at the receipt-based system going forward with an audit challenge that could be there and whatever percentage that the harvesters would get from the receipt that the processors get, it would be a given.

Time to start for the formula in the crab fishery would be as soon as the crab fishery ends, then let's get started at the formula right away.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Hopefully, by Christmastime, with still ample time before the start of the next fishery, we've got that put to bed with a formula.

I want, in my remaining time, to touch on the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board. I presented a petition on behalf of the residents of the District of Bonavista and several other people that were interested in becoming a licensed harvester. The petition stated that the rule that going through the program to be licensed as the harvester, 75 per cent of the income had to come from the fishery and only 25 per cent outside.

Many of the people trying to get into the fishing industry state that it's unrealistic. The only thing the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board would suggest is that you go on EI. Don't work, really, and you go on EI. If you don't do that, you don't move through the apprenticeship and level 1 and level 2.

There are several people who have advocated for that and for changes in the harvesting certification. Several names have come up: David Boyd of Twillingate, which would be, Speaker, in your district. David, from Tizzard's Harbour, is a big advocate. His son is a master mariner.

But in order for his son to take over his enterprise, he's going to have to give up his employment. Because remember, only 25 per cent while he goes through the certification process to five years, he can't have another job outside the fishery in order to get his certification in the fishery. But once you get your certification in the fishery, you can go ahead and do your thing thereafter and it's nobody's issue. But going through the system, you've got that restriction.

Eugene Conway, Harbour Main, from St. Brides. Grew up in the fishery, another master mariner – a master mariner unlimited and can take any vessel in the world. He wanted to come home and buy an enterprise. He had the finances, worked the last two years and with the crab fishery the way it was, and utilizing other species, he could provide for his family with three young children. But he knew he couldn't do it this year.

This year he couldn't do it because he knew that the price of crab where it was and the other species and plus he couldn't get a berth because we know what the situation is the year. He's back trying to find and he's gotten work now with several contracts but he wants to become a harvester in Newfoundland and Labrador and buy a

licence. But he can't get through those five years. That's an issue.

Now the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board challenged my petition, wrote a letter to me and said I may have been off-track, provide a copy to the minister. But my petition just represented those that would be in the industry are trying to get the harvesting that they couldn't go through. So we haven't had that meeting yet with the board but I do look forward to meeting with them.

Another gentleman, Ryan Everard from Petty Harbour would state the same thing. He desires to look after or to have his father's enterprise. But in order to do it, he's got to give up any work outside the fishery and go on EI for a five-year period. Then, after that, it doesn't matter.

So I would say to you, everyone in the House would look at that and say we want the fishing industry to be a professional operation without moonlighters, but the way they've got it they need to revisit it so we can make an easier pathway for people to enter the profession.

I mentioned to the minister, this morning, in a well-known supermarket chain in our province, one of the fish harvesters in Bonavista took a picture and sent it to me. It was a cod fillet on sale. The cost of it was \$12.32 – \$28.64 a kilogram. It was from Iceland, which nothing wrong with that. It was Icelandic and it had the certification of MSC, Marine Stewardships Council.

So I would ask the minister and his team this morning, where are we with our products and our cod and our product having the MSC Certification label? Well, we're working towards that. There is a process that's going on and it's not easy, but it is impacting the price that we would get for the product if we don't have that label. Remember sustainability. If the low quota that we've got in Newfoundland and Labrador, our province, one would think that

ought to be a big check mark for sustainability because we're not allowed to catch too many.

I don't know what process it is, but it is certainly something that we need to be looking at to make sure that we've got the certification that would be. I also ask the minister, when will we see some legislation related to the fisheries in the House? I'm hoping and looking forward to the *Aquaculture Act*. I think there are some amendments coming that are going to be helpful to the industry. The aquaculture industry of Newfoundland and Labrador now has 6,500 employees. I think that number is correct. If not – 6,500 is correct. I know it now.

The other thing was the Premier's Greene report said that for every one job in the aquaculture industry, there are three spinoff jobs. So if you did the math on that, that is really producing a lot in the fishery and we're growing the aquaculture in the province.

The last thing I had mentioned in my 10 minutes was the fact that the minister had said, when we talk about seals, the minister stated – quote – it's all right to say we should do something, we need to know what we need to do.

Now, I would say we probably put together an all-party Committee to come up with some suggestion as to what we can do to look at the imbalance in our seal ecosystem. Before the Member for CBS steals my microphone, I know I'm getting closer to 10 minutes, I am going to sit down and give the minister a chance to address that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very happy to get the opportunity to stand here and speak about a fantastic budget and concurrence. That's what we're doing here today, we're talking about concurrence. I get the opportunity to stand up and address some of the concerns that were raised by some of my hon. colleagues across the way.

I'll start with the term revisionist history because I think it's really important for people to understand that facts do actually matter. I think my colleague from Topsail - Paradise uses that term an awful lot, that facts do matter. I agree with him on that statement. I think we both use that a lot. I think both in different contexts, but, yes, from my standpoint, I think it's really, really important that we all stand up here and get the opportunity to say what we think is good about the budget and, in turn, what also we think can be improved. Obviously, no one budget can address all the concerns for everyone in the province, we all understand that, we all stand up here and agree to that anyway.

I am glad that I get the opportunity to follow my colleague, the MHA for CBS because as we've talked about many times, we all get the opportunity to put on a show sometimes here. I know the hon. Member does from time to time and I would cast him definitely in the lead role for the Trinity Pageant without a doubt.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: The Trinity Pageant, and the hon. colleague from Bonavista would know that for sure. I would cast the MHA for CBS in the leading role, without a doubt, for some of the things that he's able to get on with, which is excellent.

The good thing about *Hansard* is that we all get the opportunity to read ourselves in history and in posterity. I'm not going to do down the road of what he thinks I'm going to

go down the road, even though I would love to.

I think the other thing that I would like to highlight is that's the good thing about being in the House of Assembly, when we get the opportunity to stand up for our words that we say at the times, whether we agree with them at the time or we can be educated or we get the opportunity to be educated ourselves so that we make a different decision in the future. I think I've learned from all Members in the House of Assembly on all sides that had that opportunity to bring something forward, that educates me or someone that I care about, that provides that insight to me. I think that's the important thing about the cut and thrust of debate that we have here in this House of Assembly.

I always try to take the high road and try to not go too low or too high on anything because I think, as a group, and as Labour Minister, that's a challenge sometimes, too, to be on that fence. But one of the things that I think is really interesting about what we've been able to accomplish in our budget and some of the things that I'm going to get the opportunity to, hopefully, in my time, address some of the colleagues that brought up concerns throughout their own opportunities, I'm going to get that opportunity, hopefully, to address some of those throughout our budget.

I know that the hon. Member for Lab West talked about active transportation and public transit in one of his talks in this House of Assembly. I agree with him. That's part of the reason why we were happy to announce \$27.8 million in a partnership with Metrobus as well as active living transportation in the City of St. John's. I know that's one area in the province, but there are many other things that we've done that we're going to continue to expand. I can see that the hon. Member is very excited about that, the announcement that we've made there. I look forward to that.

I will, however, though, talk about the MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands, which I tend to agree with him a lot on his feelings about Muskrat Falls. But today I was a bit shocked that the gentleman, who talks all the time about being hoodwinked, sounded to me a little bit like he was saying that it's not nearly as bad as we try to portray it.

Well, what I can say is, sitting right here listening to \$180 million in this going to Hydro and some \$200 million that may be in addition to interest that's caused by that, there's a significant amount of money that's coming out of our Treasury each and every year and in perpetuity that I hope gets better over time. But I know full well that the hon. Member, probably more than any of us, feels that he was cheated in the whole debate with Muskrat at the time. I was a bit surprised that that was – maybe I took it the wrong way, maybe I did. I'll get the opportunity to listen to him when he comes back from there, which is excellent.

I was surprised, I have to be honest.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the minister to address the Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also to stay relevant to what we're discussing.

B. DAVIS: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I really apologize for that and I thank you for the protection from my colleagues across the way. Sorry about that.

I will get the opportunity to address some of the concerns addressed by the hon. Member for Ferryland and the hon. Member for Bonavista about the oil to electric. So I'll get to that over the next little bit with an opportunity that I'm going to talk about. But I do have the opportunity to highlight some of the opportunities that we're doing in this

budget with respect to my own department, the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

So based on *Budget 2023*, we've advanced the province's Climate Change Action Plan, which has been a benefit. We're achieving net zero GHG emissions by 2050. That's the goal. We're moving that target. We're getting better at that. You'll see from the recent reductions from the industry side that we're actually meeting those targets and that's a good sign. It's by no stretch where we're to. We're going to get there, but that's a starting step that's in the right direction that we haven't seen in a while. It took a little time to get there, but we're getting better.

But we're also in the ability to support communities in the adaptation and change that's respective to climate change, targeting activities that will lower our carbon footprint, position Newfoundland and Labrador as a cleaner energy centre of excellence, which is an important piece that I think all of us can agree with.

We have somewhere close to \$60 million in reduced greenhouse gas emissions, while addressing energy affordability as well. This funding includes some \$27 million for residential rebates. I'll talk a little bit about that for my colleagues across the way in a second. Also, \$30 million for projects for private, municipal, not-for-profit and public sector under the Low Carbon Economy Fund. That is programs that we're talking about with the oil to electric and heat pump affordability program, which supports some 1,840 homeowners.

We put \$3 million into support to transition to electric vehicles; \$2 million for flood risk mapping, which is very important. I know the hon. Member for Gander, and I know the hon. Member on the Southwest Coast of our province and many of our coastal communities are experiencing all of these impacts. Anything we can do that lets municipalities understand where the floods

are going to happen, where the rivers can move to and those things, storms surges, those are all things that are factored into our department and what we'll look at. Those things will help municipal planning for the best municipal planning that we can in the province.

In addition to that, we've also put \$2 million in waste management, more than \$500,000 to increase capacity for the environmental assessments and regulatory oversight for wind hydrogen projects, which is key, and I know my colleagues from the other side in the Conservative caucus will agree that that investment is going to pay off dividends for investment in the future.

We also have \$300,000 to establish a permanent program for water surveillance with respect to the partnership with Health and Community Services. That will look at our Health and Community Services side but also all that information that will come along not just for COVID but other strains that will come forward, Mr. Speaker, which is very, very important. Protecting our environment and providing quality services to residents remains a key focus and a priority for us and we're going to continue to do that.

One of the other things that I think is really important that I'd like to highlight is the fact that we're also moving along our five-year Climate Change Action Plan. We're getting nearer to the end of that. We still have another year and a bit left to this. We're working on a new one. We're going to look forward to putting measurable targets in there that we can achieve as a collective province to better our chances at hitting the 2050. We want to make sure we do that and even better than that if we can. But it's going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach to do that.

Part of that is a partnership that we've had with our municipalities, the federal government. I highlighted one for the MHA for Lab West talking about accessible buses

and things like that and accessible trails. But the partnership with the federal government on a Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund is a significant one. It's allowed us to pour in a significant amount of money into municipalities for fuel switching. It's allowed us an awful lot of opportunity to put money into residential, to offer them the opportunity to move from oil to electric. That's going to pay off dividends not only for the greenhouse gas emission reductions, which will be beneficial, but also to save them money each and every month that their heat bill will come in.

Those programs we invested some \$78 million through the fund to support greenhouse gas reductions. For all those said reasons I think that's an important piece. All of those by 2030 are going to approximately reduce the province's carbon footprint by 615,000 tons and provide an opportunity for 650 direct person-years of employment, which is an important piece for that.

One example we don't need to look very far for – I know the hon. Member for CBS loves to talk about Memorial University and I would tend to agree that it's a first-rate institution and the great work they do. The electrification project that Memorial's undertaking now to take care of the oil-fired burners and turn them into electric burners, which is an important piece, that's going to save 28,000 tons per year. Significant from our standpoint. That's equivalent to 5,600 cars coming off the road each and every year.

My colleague for Bonavista and my colleague for Ferryland were keen to talk about the Oil to Electric Rebate Program. I think it's worth talking about how successful that has been just in this year alone. So in this year, up to March 31, we had 2,016 applications come in which is an impressive amount considering the year prior was only about 100.

So it's a significant uptake that's happened for a lot of reasons. One was, I think we found a sweet spot on the amount of money for residents. I think there are some barriers that have been highlighted, not by just the Members across the way, but Members of this caucus as well that had the opportunity to highlight some of the barriers that existed in that program before. So we've addressed them.

The new program, when it comes out, you'll see that those barriers will be reduced. We're hopeful and look forward to the multi-year aspect of this one that's going to take some 10,000 homes from oil to electric, which is going to be an important piece. The starting point on it, for my hon. Members across the way, is it will be a minimum of \$5,000 but it can go – I speak to the MHA for Bonavista because he asked the question – as high as \$17,000 depending on the technology and the income brackets of the people that are applying for the funding. One piece, the barrier that is highlighted, that we're really trying to wrestle with to make sure we didn't have that as a barrier for people making the choice was the upfront cost.

So we're trying to pay direct to the people that are installing these units to help in the cost so people don't have to have that upfront or at least all of it upfront. So that's one of the things we're working on. I'm impressed by what we've been able to accomplish. I know that it's going to be a lot further.

We have enlisted the utilities in the province to administer this because they are the ones that already have all of the information with respect to the homeowners and the ratepayers and things like that. So it'll be an easy application process, similar to the last one where it will be applied from through one of the utilities, whichever one you're utilizing, whether it be Hydro or Newfoundland Power and it'll be quick turnarounds. I think the average time frame was about 30 days from the time frame

depending on if all of your information was included.

People can start putting their name forward on the list if they'd like to now, but I'm very hopeful that the partnership with the federal government, we're in the final stages of trying to get those contracts signed now. So once that's done, we'll be able to move forward on that and that's going to unlock a little bit more money, as I said before, minimum \$5,000 up to as much as \$17,000 depending on the technology and the income levels of the people that are applying.

So hopefully that will address some of the concerns. I know that my colleague from CSSD had a program that we funded, Home Energy Savings Program, from oil heat. I think that was an important piece as well. We raised the limit last year from \$32,500 to \$52,500 which is an important piece and that allowed us to expend the money because we were having a little bit of trouble getting people to apply and we wanted to make sure that that money was used for the lower income bracket so we raised that to make sure more people could avail of it and that will help in that process.

I can go on and on about some of the things that we're looking at. I know my time is getting a little short, but one of the things I would like to say is some of the highlights that I was very proud of is what we've been able to accomplish on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by partnership. It's not going to happen by myself and everyone in this House making those changes in solitude. It happens if all of us together are going to make meaningful change in the province, whether that's when it comes time to purchase a vehicle, looking at an electric vehicle as an option. It's not an option for everybody today. The prices are coming down each and every day. Every time a new car shows up the prices are coming down based on those.

I'm not suggesting that they're all accessible for everybody right now, Mr. Speaker, but I'm hopeful that everybody will eventually be able to move to that level. As the prices come down, you've got to look at a couple of things, the cost of ownership is significantly less than a gas-powered vehicle. I know that's a challenge for some and as we build the infrastructure further out, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be important for us all to realize that Rome wasn't built in a day, neither will the infrastructure that's required for electric vehicles but we have major strides coming forward with that. We look forward to expanding that network even further. I can't wait to stand up and get the opportunity to talk in the future on this again.

Thank you very much to my colleagues for attentively listening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a privilege to get up in this House of Assembly to talk about the Resource Committee and especially I'd just like to make a few points on Environment and Climate Change and, of course, on Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture. We did Estimates today so I'd just like to chime in on a couple of points of that.

Environment and climate change, none of us, I don't think, are deniers of climate change. We know it's real. We know it's coming. We know it's here. The changes that we've seen in our weather patterns in the past few years – I can remember when Igor came across, probably 10, 12 years ago and caused a lot of damage. We know for certain and for sure that climate change is here and we have to do things to change our weather patterns.

But I don't think that should come with a cost to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think we've already paid enough. When we're looking at green energy, of course, Muskrat Falls was mentioned here earlier today and we all know how green that project is and what we've done for green energy already.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: A few more points, Mr. Speaker, in our environment, when it comes to green energy, education could go a long way. I can remember years ago, we used to throw away – there would be a lot of garbage in the woods. There would be a lot of bottles, a lot of stuff around the sides of the roads. Through education, we cleaned that all up. Our province became clean.

We took that stuff out of the way to help with our climate change initiatives. So that's stuff we did through education, not through cost. We certainly don't need the cost of a carbon tax right now coming in to effect the people of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, waste management is another thing. Boards and fees, there are a lot of boards in the waste management areas that we're paying for the boards for waste management to try to come up with some initiatives for that. So that's another thing we can look at with regard to our environment and climate change.

We know that the wind projects are coming, we know that there's initiatives for wind, but while we do that, while we look at the value of the wind that's coming in, the projects that's there, we've got to do one important thing and that's look after our environment, look after our lands, look after our resources. That comes with thorough environmental assessments that we need to make sure that our resources are ours and that the resources of our lands remain ours

and we keep it clean. We need to put in some initiative there that after those people leave, whenever that timeline comes, that they pay for what they put here and to make sure our properties are put back the way they came in, leave our land the way they found it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: We need to do that in those initiatives.

The minister did just mention the electric vehicles as part of those programs. Yes, electric vehicles are fine and we know that the upfront prices of those vehicles, some of those are enormous prices. For people to take advantage of some of those initiatives, they just can't do it. Same thing with the heat pumps and the electric to oil changeovers. They can't afford the upfront costs. So I'm glad that the minister is going to take some initiative to look at some of those programs and make sure that we'll get the programs straightened out for those peoples. If we're going to do that, we need to soon get those programs in place.

Water-boil advisories, I think our province right now has been on a lot of water boil advisories. In the year 2023, for a lot of communities to be on water-boil advisories, that's something that we certainly need to take a great look at. I mean to say, that's one of the great necessities that we do need is fresh and clean water. To know that we're on a lot of water-boil orders, it's something that we need to certainly take initiatives and more funding to go into the water-boil orders.

I know there are some initiatives gone into it, but we need to make sure that everybody has got safe and clean drinking water.

Speaker, with that, I'll reverse to Forestry and Agriculture that we did the Estimates on this morning. I've spoken about this a number of times, that in areas 10, 11 and 12, there is no secondary processing. There

is outside of 10, 11 and 12. I believe area 2 might have one; area 2, probably 17, 18. They have secondary processing, but areas 10, 11 and 12 have no secondary processing. By the way, that is the fibre basket of Newfoundland and Labrador; that's been known as the fibre basket. We have the best black spruce and I guess that's why other people want to come in and rake that part of the Island, especially in 10, 11 and 12 and take out the timber from 10, 11 and 12 because of the easy access to take it out of that part of the Island.

So it would be nice to see something. I know the permits right now are all taken up again for the next five years, that's allocated, the full 280,000 cubic metres, then probably they're looking for more because the forest fire last year, they lost a lot of fibre, a lot of timber in that forest fire. So I'm thinking that some of the contractors that may have had permits in that area, may be looking for more allocations. Where are they going to get those allocations? I don't know but I'm sure they're going to be looking for more allocations probably in those areas or around those areas to make up for the loss that they made in the forest area.

I'd like to see more for the areas of 10, 11 and 12 to get a secondary processing unit, of course, and more permits for 10, 11 and 12, rather than the timber and fibre being taken away from area 10, 11 and 12. But I know there's logging throughout the province. Logging is very important, always has been to our province and still will be. Hopefully it will be for years to come, with protection limits that we can do and that kind of stuff. We need to protect our forests and we certainly need to make sure that that resource is there as a renewable resource for years to come. So we do need to take steps and to make initiatives for that.

Again, in Crown Lands, we know there are a number of issues that's plaguing Crown Lands right now, application, of course, the timelines for applications. We've heard

throughout the province that application timelines are very, very slow. I know the government is making some initiatives. There was a thing there, probably there are seven or eight divisions that they've got to go through before the process gets approved, which takes a long, long time.

Again, we've heard it time and time again, we had a debate on it last week with regard to Crown lands and people wanting to sell their lands, sell their houses, sell their properties, downsizing their properties or move or just sell their properties to go into apartments or different units, something smaller than they've got there now. But when they go to sell their land, they get caught up in red tapes, lawyer fees, government permits, government deeds, government titles. They find themselves in an awkward situation that they can't sell their land. Apparently, they don't own their land, they get caught up in exorbitant costs to try to get that straightened out, especially through lawyer fees, land searches and surveys, and then the government wants current day prices for their land.

Last week, we did bring in a PMR with some initiatives. What we wanted mostly was some legislation to come through the House of Assembly that we could start the process on having Crown lands looked at; we can bring some legislation in here that we can debate. There were two or three proposals that we put forth and there was also proposals put through, through engageNL that we could have looked at. With that, there was time that we could bring in some legislation; hopefully, that's coming pretty soon, that we can put through some legislation.

To see that side of the House, the Liberal side of the House, the governing side of the House, stand up and vote against that PMR to help the people of this province. I'm disappointed, really disappointed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: When we don't need a price for carbon tax, we need education. We're after doing our own education on it. We put in Muskrat Falls for green energy. We know we can use it. So when the government on the other side stood up last year and voted for carbon tax to be taxed to the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, yet they stood up and voted against a PMR that could help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, it don't make sense, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: So with that, Speaker, I'll take my seat and let somebody else have a chat.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to start my comments this evening to reference a couple of points that some of my colleagues made. One of my colleagues, the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, talked about defibrillators and it's a great point. We've spent a lot of money in this province on defibrillators. They're in arenas, they're in a lot of seniors' clubs and they're in other jurisdictions.

One of the things, though, we've talked about and I don't know if this has been done and maybe the minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but do we have an inventory in our province of where defibrillators are in every single community? Because as we go through this 911 process, it would important to know where all of these defibrillators are located and it would be important to have that information online so that in the case of any emergency, if someone has an issue, that defibrillator could be there, they'd know where to access it. I don't know if that's online or not.

The other interesting point I wanted to bring up, my colleague just spoke about the number of boards that are associated with our garbage. It is interesting that we have

more boards looking after garbage in our province than we do health care. I know there was a report done some two years ago that recommended going to one board. That has never been acted upon. So that has to stop. That type of reports that are being done for government, those recommendations needed to be acted upon. They're not being acted upon at all.

I want to spend the majority of my time this evening talking about the fishery. Just like many other people in this House, my ancestors came to this great province of ours because of the fishery. I would suggest that many more people in this House, their ancestors came here for the very same reason. Today, people all over this great province of ours are carrying on those traditions and carrying on a fishery that our ancestors came here for.

I'm very proud of that ancestry. My folks grew up in a little, tiny community called Petite Forte in Placentia Bay and they came from fishing families. My father and uncle – my uncle was a full-time fisherman and they continued to fish. As a matter of fact, my first job was in the fishery, in Grade 7, going door to door in Placentia selling fresh codfish, 50 cents for a small one and \$1 for a whole one.

Now, I was limited in how many fish I got to sell because my father and my uncle would bring it to the plant first, sell so much to the plant and then they'd bring it back because they wanted to salt it for the winter. But they would give me some to go door to door selling. The catch was that the first \$10 I made I had to bring it back to them, and why was that? Because they would like to buy a bottle of whiskey. That was great because the more whiskey they drank, the less they wanted to salt. So, at the end of the day, it worked out better for me.

That was my entrepreneurial gift from my father and my uncle. I think for me when people talk about the fishery and giveaways, a lot of people refer to Muskrat –

not Muskrat Falls rather, but the Upper Churchill. They say that the Upper Churchill was the biggest giveaway in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. I would argue that it wasn't. It was actually 1949, when we joined Confederation and we decided to hand over the management of our fishery to the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I will argue that we've been paying for that ever since then because the Government of Canada has used the richest fishing resource in the world when we joined Confederation in 1949 for the benefit of other provinces for trade. So allowing other countries to come and have quotas in our waters. Those types of deals have gone on for centuries.

At the same time, here we stand today and we still don't have joint management of our fisheries. The federal government controls the size of our boats, controls the size of our quota, controls what type of gear we use, and also controls, supposedly, the fishery science. I use that word loosely, "supposedly," because we have seen a decline in the science being carried out off our coast in our waters.

This has had a significant impact. Imagine the federal government decides to close the mackerel fishery at the same time as our country to the south, the United States, continue on with a mackerel fishery in the same mass, albeit at a reduced quota. But they continued to allow a mackerel fishery. The federal government shut ours down. Now we've heard talk about the capelin fishery and the potential that they may want to impose and shut that down.

At the same time, my colleague from Bonavista will tell you that the seal population off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador consumes more capelin in a day than what our total allowable catch of capelin is for the entire year. But nobody wants to talk about that. The federal

government doesn't want to talk about that, that's for sure. They again impose these restrictions on us.

A few years ago, they tried to take the surf clam quota out of Grand Bank. An arbitrary decision by a federal Fisheries minister. No other rationale than they wanted to move it to the mainland because he wanted to look after somebody who was close to him. Those are the kind of decisions that have been made in the past. Those are the kind of decisions that have to stop. We're not saying we're going to take over the management of the fishery, but we deserve to be part of that management. We deserve a joint management for the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: When I think about our offshore oil and how that was negotiated and the fact that we have a board, the C-NLOPB or something like that, in terms of numbers, but the message is we have a board. We have an accord that looks after the oil off our shore. Why can we not have the same type of accord to look after the fish off our coast? Because we deserve that. That needs to happen.

As I said, if we can have an accord for oil then we should have an accord for fish because that industry, that fishing industry, as my colleague for Bonavista likes to say, is the only renewable megaproject that we have. Every single year it brings in hundreds of thousands of dollars, almost a billion dollars or more in revenue. Again, my colleague says why not \$2 billion. I agree with him, why not. But that's exactly where we should be going in the fishery.

We talk about the adjacency principle. We like to see the quotas – we should have adjacency principle for our fishery so those who live closest to the resource should benefit the most from the resource. Maybe we need an adjacency principle for our processing, for our plants. Think about that.

The idea that what you catch you process closest to where you offload it.

Imagine you don't have to truck it for miles over a road to another plant to be processed. Imagine if we had that kind of incentive in place not only for our wild fish but for our farmed fish. Maybe then all of the salmon that are being farmed on the Burin Peninsula would not be leaving, travelling over the highway to be processed somewhere else. With a commitment and maybe it wasn't a commitment, maybe it was a promise, maybe it wasn't a promise, but whatever it was there isn't anybody who can stand in this House and tell me that when that \$30-million investment was made by this government, a good investment for the people of the Burin Peninsula, when that investment was made, nobody could tell me that it wasn't implied that that farmed salmon would be processed on the Burin Peninsula. That was implied, if nothing else, and that was what was expected.

It's fine for the Premier to say it's a private company, they can make arrangements. Well, that private company had no hesitation in taking \$30 million from the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador. As I said, a good investment for the people of the Burin Peninsula. But now we're left with a plant in St. Lawrence with an expectation of processing and it's gone, it's been moved. That's just not good enough. We have to fight that. We must continue to fight for our fishery.

Speaker, I'll finish up by talking about the current situation. Here we are at the 11th hour, for three weeks now people have been without work, fish plant workers have not been working, harvesters have not been harvesting, processors have not be processing and buyers have not been buying. We are in a crisis. The people that work in the industry deserve our help – they need our help. There are plant workers out there right now with no income coming in; there are crews that work with no income coming in.

We have to do better. We need this issue resolved. We cannot continue to wait. It needs to be fixed. It's not only the people directly in the industry, it's all of the people that are impacted, all the businesses that are impacted in every single community in this province because our fishery has ground to a halt. Just go around this province, I've travelled and talked to a lot of people and they will tell you that impact is being felt throughout this entire province.

There's an urgency here to get these people back to work. Let's take that urgency – maybe the Premier needs to strike a Committee of the House, an all-party Committee, get together, get the harvesters back, get the processors back and get this settled because we need that done immediately.

Speaker, I ask, I urge, we have got to move on. We have got to get this done.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's great to stand up here and talk about the Resource Committee and the concurrence of it. It strikes well because I come from one of the largest mining districts in Canada. It's one of the longest running mines, right now, in this province and in some places in Canada. It still continues to produce from the same general area.

It has been a well-oiled machine that has produced consistently, lots and lots of revenue for this province and it continues to do so because it has a very great outlook for the future. Next year will be 70 years of continuous iron mining in Labrador West and then following that, if you combine the multiple mining operations there, it's 200

years' worth of reserves still in the ground there.

So long after my time, we'll still be mining iron ore in Labrador West. I'm the third generation to be up there now; my children are the fourth generation up there now. Out of my two kids, maybe, hopefully, one of them will continue the family tradition of iron mining.

At the same time, I want to continue to talk about the opportunity that this mining has for this province, but also, at the same time, to follow up with the hon. Minister of Environment who talked about this. You know, we have the opportunity now to transform a complete industry in the region and by doing so would actually create more jobs, more opportunities, have an even further outlook for the mining industry in Labrador West because we have the ability to actually produce some of the cleanest iron ore that is actually sought after on the world market right now.

Our biggest hiccup now is we don't have enough electricity. It's amazing to say that Labrador West does not have enough electricity to actually transform the mining industry. I know we want to move forward. We want to continue down this path but it's going to take a lot of work and a lot of investment from the province and others to actually do this.

Right now, I have businesses and everything like that that want to expand, to grow, who are actually confined by the amount of electricity we actually have in the region, which is pretty interesting to talk about. We need more energy and we can use a lot of it. There's opportunity there to completely decarbonize the entire process of pelletization, to completely decarbonize the process of drying the iron ore. These processes currently use bunker C, one of the dirtiest fuels out there. This is currently what we're using right now in many of the processes.

We talk about the opportunity of going forward, greening the economy, things like that, Speaker, but at the same time, it takes investment, it takes courage, it takes will. The biggest driver behind why the mining industry in Labrador West wants to do this is because of Europe. There are stringent rules, there are tough rules on pollution and, get this, carbon tax, because there was imposed a tax on carbon in Europe, they are required now to actually find cleaner steel to smelt; easy to smelt, that uses low carbon, uses low amounts of that is what they're looking for. Guess where the largest deposits of it are in the world? Labrador West.

The iron ore, the very pure iron ore that comes out of Labrador West is some of the best iron ore to actually decarbonize the entire steel making industry in Europe. They're banging our doors. They want to come up. We have opportunities here. We have other prospectors up here looking our way. We have junior miners again looking at some of the different deposits up our way. We have a golden opportunity to grow the mining industry in Labrador right now and it's because of the rapid decarbonization of the steel making industry. So I, and my fellow miners in Labrador West, have a great opportunity to grow the industry but also grow the region and become the supplier of iron ore to Europe.

It's a fascinating thing, but we have to get on board. At the same time, we can't be a slouch about it because we need to actually get the energy and get the encouragement to actually do this because we can do it. We can be the leading edge when it comes to decarbonization of the mining industry. We could be the ones to actually develop and test the technologies that are needed and help the rest of the province in the technology industry by being the ones to be the first to do it.

We do a lot of R & D in this province and in this country. This province is very good at research and development of all kinds of

different things. We look at the Resource Committee, the resources of iron ore is just one thing on top of the resources of human resources. The actual people that make up this province is a massive resource in itself because, per capita as a province, we're one of the highest educated, post-educated individuals in this country. We take post-secondary education very seriously in this province. We have so many great homegrown people that do research and development. That can be transcended easily to the mining industry because we've done it in oil and gas, we've done it in aquaculture, we've done it in health care, everything. We have the ability. So as a leading edge in mining, we can also be leading R & D in the mining industry.

We want to talk about going forward and moving towards a greener economy, but it takes persistence, will and the ability to actually carry it out. Like I said, I see it all in my region. I have businesses and the mining industry itself, and everything like that, saying this is the direction we want to go in. This is the direction we should go in because, at the same time, it has potential. It actually comes with large-scale investment. It comes with large-scale opportunity to actually install new technology, between the construction and maintenance.

The actual changeover to green steel and green iron will come with massive amounts of investment from the mining industry because they have no choice. They have to switch. They have to change if they want to move forward. If they actually want to be a part of the new global market, you have an entire continent that has to decarbonize its steel-making industry and move forward, well, guess what? We're the first ones they're going to come to because we have the product. We have the ore in the ground. We have some of the highest grade ore in the world and some of the best quality, plus you're mining in Canada, so it checks all the boxes for the European market.

So this is where we need to go. This is why we need to actually take it serious and take climate change serious but also take decarbonizing our industries seriously because we are in the prime place. We're the closest point to Europe in North America. We have the resources they want. We have the minerals they want. At the same time, there are opportunities for investment. There are opportunities for work, good-paying work in the mining services industry. I know, I was there. It's a great place to work and I loved every minute of it.

This is an opportunity for the province and everybody else because if anywhere has it, we have the minerals. We have the expertise. We have the industry. So this is why we need to take decarbonization seriously. We need to take climate change seriously and investments in climate change seriously.

I'll say the minister, he talked about all the other things you're doing, but think about how much we can do when we start decarbonizing two large facilities that burn hundreds of thousands of litres of bunker C – it's one of the dirtiest fuels out there – every single day, but if we can take that and move it to clean hydroelectricity, how much we can actually save that way then and start decarbonizing the mining industry. If we were to become one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to start doing it, then we can be the leaders in it. Then they will have the others coming to us asking how we did it.

I want to say this is an important thing. We have other mineral extraction. We have other opportunities here too that also can follow suit, but when it comes to the processing side of it though, I think we're one of the largest and Labrador West is, I believe, the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the province just from those processing facilities in Lab West alone.

I don't want to be part of the district that has the third largest emitter of greenhouse gas; I want to be one of the cleanest regions, employ the most amount of people in a good-paying industry. The mining industry is a great industry to work in. I hope that the district takes it seriously and the government take it seriously, that we need to change, our region wants to change and we want to be able to access the massive amount of energy we're going to need to do it. Hopefully we can get to that place and we can actually start moving forward when it comes to this.

With that, Speaker, I take my seat.

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 on this again and certainly thank the residents of the Ferryland District for voting me in here. This is my job, to get up here and bring up some topics.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for his explanation. I'm sure he'll get a little deeper into it the next time he speaks on it, but I'd certainly like to thank him for that. When he was up, he did address it like we asked him to, so I certainly thank him.

I'm going to touch on Crown lands, first. I had a letter here and I made some notes on it just to be able to speak about it. It is certainly an issue. I just want to touch on some points. This is what happened to one person in my district. His brother applied for an application in 1979 for Crown lands. An application was approved, the land surveyed and granted to him, step one. Someone in the community complained that it was church land. So Crown Lands sent out an investigator and after his investigation, he recommended that it was

church land. It was recognized as such by Crown Lands that it was church land.

So he was reimbursed for his expenses and his survey cost. At this point, he was fed up and walked away from it. His brother, after discussing it with him, applied to the Grand Falls Archdiocese to buy the land. His aim was to build a cabin and eventually he did. The Archdiocese directed my request to the party's counsel of King's Cove and they agreed to sell it. So I purchased the land, he said, and once he received the bill of sale, from council and the parish, he said I built a cabin.

A few years ago, he said he had the land surveyed and applied to have it registered with lawyers in Clarendville area and they handled the processes for him. During this process it appears that Crown Lands, once again, considered this land as belonging to the Crown, even after designated to the church land back in the 1980s. So this process keeps dragging on, costing him thousands of dollars with no resolution in sight.

Now, I see the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay laughing because it is laughable that this happened. It's incredible. Then we do a PMR the other day and they voted against it. We're just trying to help the people in Newfoundland and Labrador get their land straightened out and if we could make a simple process – I know it is not simple, because then you'd have people trying to add piracy and go take other people's land. But that is incredible to read out that it happened to somebody. That's not only one. How many more has this happened to? It's laughable. I have got to tell you, it's laughable. It's just terrible.

So, again, I said I'd touch on Crown lands and also I'm going to touch on something else now. This week we got our – and I have to go to my phone for this – list of students that we all have; summer students that are applying for jobs. I am going to say when I first started it was probably at

\$32,000 that you had to try to manufacture or get in the number of people that applied or students that applied for summer employment in their communities, wherever that may be. Then it went down to \$30,944, I checked today, from last year's list and this year's list is \$28,600, I think. So that's down about roughly \$2,500 to \$3,000. So we got one less student that's going to be working.

So you talk about getting in here and trying to discuss stuff, to bring up stuff in the House of Assembly. We spend \$250,000 in Grand Falls for an office for the Premier per year – \$250,000. That's a million dollars in four years. How many students could that be? How many students would that be?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: That's not only me. There are 40 of us here in the House that could have more students; that's roughly about \$25,000 per district over the four years. So that's a whole year of students that you could have over those four years.

Now, our request, when they came in, was \$144,000 based on the request that I had.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much you got?

L. O'DRISCOLL: I got \$28,600. We've got to try to be fair to everybody. We're trying to give everybody a student and people don't understand that if I applied for one and someone else applied for eight, another group applied for two, we're trying to give everybody and be fair to everybody and give everybody a student, at least, or a couple if that can happen.

But to go out and spend \$250,000 per year for an office in Grand Falls is ridiculous. That's something that they should be looking at. You're coming up from recommendations, I know you're heads are over there like Don Cherry took his collar off, but that's exactly what's going on. Our heads are up and down, you can't believe it.

But there's a million dollars that we're not giving to the students.

When they get paid, they're going to spend that money here in this province. They're going to spend it. They're not putting it in their pockets and saving it. They're going to spend it in a grocery store – not even in a grocery store – in an Avalon Mall or some mall somewhere they're spending their money. They're going out to get new clothes, new sneakers; they're going to spend the money.

That's what's disappointing that goes on in government, and every government, not only this one, every government. It's time for that stuff to change. We're elected here to change that and we're doing nothing about it, only adding to the problems.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm running out of time pretty quick here.

I wanted to touch on the fishery because I know that the fishery is pretty convoluted in how it all works. We all know that's not easy to fix. We all know the industry. I've worked in the industry, my father was a fisherman; I was down in the plant cutting out tongues. But there's probably an opportunity to let outside buyers come in.

Now, that doesn't help the plant workers in our province, absolutely, but what can it hurt where we're standing right now, if that's one of the things they're looking for. Give it an opportunity for a year or two. See what happens, see if it works out; who knows. But we don't give it a chance. No, it's off the board. Well, I think it's wrong. I think we should give it an opportunity.

Now, listen, there are plant workers in my area. Maybe they're going to buy crab from outside and bring it in here to help them, who knows. But it's not happening right now. Our fishermen do not get a chance or anybody else to come in and give them a

price, because it may make them buy here. If somebody came in here, it may make the plant owners buy here.

We can stand here and not talk about it, but those are the issues that we're dealing with. I'm just tired of listening to it. We need to get this fishery going and we need to give an opportunity. That's just my take on it. I'm not saying that's right, that's my opinion on that, all right. I'll hear from a lot of fishermen and that's one of the things that we hear. So there it is, I'm going to put it out there. I think that's something that we could look at.

I know the Member for St. John's West – I've worked in a fish plant and I dealt with her relations, just looking at the fishery back then. My parents, as I said, my father was a fisherman and he'd come in with fish on Saturday evenings – he would go out and haul a trap. They were allowed to sell 5,000. Well, the fishermen would bring in 8,000 or 9,000 because he knew they were getting away with it. The plant is not going to turn it away, because they didn't work on Sundays, so they had to process what they had. Thirty-thousand in a trap, so they bottlenecked it off, they put it in a bag and tied it on the side of the trap. They brought in their 9,000 and went back out to get the fish.

They said, we'll go fillet that now and sell some of that to the local stores and stuff. They went out and opened up the bag, tried to knock off the dead ones and put them in the boat and the whole thing swam away, full. It was a full – they bagged the fish, there was that much in it, knowing that they couldn't sell it so they were going to go out and try to fillet it. When the time comes the fish is gone.

Go out Monday morning, not a fish left to be had, not a fish. They had to go to a gillnetter that got a fish in the gillnet to be able to cook one in the stew. He cooked the stew every single morning of the week. On Saturdays, they had about 10 or 12 people that would go out with our crew to go fishing

and it was unbelievable how it happened every Saturday morning with a crew that would go out with him.

So I've been around the fishery. I'm not a fisherman, I can tell you that. I fished for two years. I fished in the strike in '81. I went down cutting out tongues in the fish plant. We've been around it. So lots of people probably can't relate to it, I can relate to it. Am I a fisherman? By no stretch of the imagination am I a fisherman. I don't know how it all works now and all the formulas, but I can tell you I've lived around it.

There's no fish plant left in Bay Bulls now. There's an oil base down there now, coming in for offshore oil they're doing piping and stuff. So we've been around. All of a sudden our plant is gone. Those people are out of work. Now they went to work at something else.

I will touch on the fishery. The Member for Bonavista brought up a gentleman in my district down in Petty Harbour, and we met with a group in Petty Harbour and this was their concern that the number of people that are in the fishery, the average age is over 40. There are only two or three that are under 40 and they thought it would be a good – well, when they first started during the strike in '92, when the fishery shut down, sorry, when it shutdown, when they started at that, they didn't want people in the fishery. I mean they didn't want anybody else coming in taking over. It's getting shutdown. They don't want other people in, but that has changed over time. That's 30 years ago this year, or last year past, sorry.

So they didn't want that, but now they do. They need young people to come in to keep the industry alive, but they have to be 75 per cent of their time in the fishery; if not, they can't qualify. So this gentleman wants to buy his dad's enterprise. Now if you wanted to go start a farm, you can go buy one today. You don't have to have any qualifications, none. But if he wants to buy

his dad's licence and he fished with him since he was 15, he can't do it.

Now, I don't care what letter that the harvester's board or whatever board sent the minister a letter, I don't care who sent it. He should have an opportunity to be able to buy that licence absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Absolutely, but he's not going to get the opportunity, unless they change little minor things and I think it can happen. I thought they could get a doctor in Trepassy, that didn't happen either. But I think this can happen. I really think it can happen. It just shouldn't happen. They should have the opportunity to be able to do that. It just doesn't make sense.

So it's killing these small communities. They want to get out, he wants to get down and do it. So now he has to quit his job, go fishing, get unemployment and stay off work; go fishing, get unemployment and stay off work instead of working. He has to do that for five years in order to qualify to buy the licence, now what part of that makes any sense? It's backwards.

We, as 40 people here, can come in, make some rules and have some look at some of this stuff to make the changes we need to make, but we're not doing them. All we want to do is hold people back. Let's start being more progressive and moving it ahead.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Marathon Gold, Altius, IOC, Vale, Tacora, rare earth minerals, the Baie Verte Peninsula, the *Stena Icemax* is gone out to drill some holes right now, ExxonMobil is

going back out in the Jeanne D'Arc Basin, mining is one of the best places in the world here in Newfoundland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Hydrogen proposals, all good. All part of the Resource Committee.

Now, I guess everyone is wondering why I'm bringing up all the good stuff, because there was something brought up very interesting earlier: Muskrat Falls. Here we go, Muskrat Falls. The bane of our existence. We have an environmental minister who talks about Muskrat Falls in a negative light when it's one of the greenest projects that the province has ever seen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We have a Premier that boasts about Muskrat Falls, when he talks about the film industry and our ability to draw people to the province, but when they talk about what it costs in here, it's a big deal. Guess what? It is a big deal. But I'll say this: In 2017, after EY did an examination of Muskrat Falls, June of 2017, the then minister of Natural Resources boastfully said Muskrat Falls is 78 per cent complete – 78 per cent complete in 2017. Fast forward, next month is June 2023, six years later. Guess what? Muskrat Falls is not complete.

So let's think about that. In 2017, the then government brought in helicopters, helicranes to be exact, to build power lines across the mountains on the Northern Peninsula, which the Justice Minister highlighted today, after being told by every person and industry that (a) we shouldn't be doing it in the middle of the winter; (b) we shouldn't be pouring concrete in those temperatures. Yet, this government refused to listen and they carried on to do it.

So if we want to talk about cost overruns, we ought to talk about how the job was managed. This job, from day one, had

management issues. Yes, perhaps it was ill-conceived, there's no question. I think a lot of us agree on that, but conception is not management and this government took over management of Muskrat Falls in 2015 with a goal to completion in 2017 and, I'll say it again, 2023 and we had a false commissioning announcement a few weeks ago. Even the Premier said that he was skeptical about the announcement that it was commissioned. Think about that.

Yet, we sit here every single day and we talk about how bad Muskrat Falls is. So let's go back to mining, let's go back to all our other exploration and let's talk about this. If you're a new miner and you're coming to this province, guess what they're going to say first? You have to have environmental green ways in order to mine. Subtract Muskrat Falls from the equation. Tell me where we get it. Do you think that Holyrood is going to do that? Absolutely not. That's not speculation, that's a fact.

You go to IOC, IOC up there, Wabush Mines or Tacora, now, sorry, and they're looking for ways to be greener so they can sell their iron ore. Do you know why? Because if they're not greener, nobody wants to buy it.

We can't from one side of our mouths talk about being green and from the other side of our mouths talk about what a bad project Muskrat Falls is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: In the very next breath, we all know that this government is exploring Gull Island. Let's go even further. This minister talked about the power lines going underneath the water, going underneath the Straits across the Gulf. What a bad idea. Yet, last week I stood here and I heard both the Finance Minister and the Premier stand in this place and say there is no Atlantic Loop without Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: There's no Loop if those power lines don't go across the Straits or the Gulf, period, period, full stop. That is a loop. I think we all know how that works.

B. DAVIS: Speak to the Speaker.

L. PARROTT: I'll speak to the Speaker, no problem there. The Minister of Environment just told me to speak to the Speaker. The same minister, the exact same –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: – minister who questions the validity of Muskrat Falls every time someone speaks in this House.

Muskrat Falls is a clean, green, extremely expensive option for this province that will at some point put us as world leaders. Zero question. We can go back to Churchill Falls and talk about how ill conceived that is. Here we are in 2023 negotiating to get some money back in 2041. Think about that. I believe it was '68 or '69 when Churchill Falls was commissioned. Just think about that in years and time frame and then tell me how bad Muskrat Falls is.

If you take Muskrat Falls and you look at how it was managed – and regardless of what anybody says, it was poorly managed. We were rushing, paying extra money to put power lines up in the middle of the winter when it wasn't needed. Yeah, we have problems with those power lines, no question. But guess what? We called in a team of experts from Quebec – I would argue that the job could've been done here if the SOP had to have been written – to break the ice off the power lines. Do you know why? Because Labrador is the north, in case somebody forgot about it. Whether those power lines went across to Quebec or out to Newfoundland there still would have been ice on them. That's what happens in

the winter. Certainly in Labrador. Ice forms on power lines. Wow, what a shock.

We have a project that will put us years ahead at some point. It might not be tomorrow. Yes, we're paying for it, but guess what? We own it – we own it. We will look forward to Gull Island. I guarantee you that this government is talking about Gull Island. Yet, not that long ago Muskrat Falls was ill conceived. Muskrat Falls represents somewhere around 7 or 8 per cent of the accessible power that's up there. Gull Island will represent the other 92, 93 per cent. If we are to be the battery that this government boasts we will be, we need Muskrat Falls. We need Churchill Falls. We need Gull Island.

I don't understand how we come in here in a daily basis and we listen to this government talk about Muskrat Falls in such a bad light. Then, today, the minister stood up and he talked about how the Premier put on his cape and flew to Ottawa and came back with \$5.2 billion. It was a loan. If you look at the money that came from Hibernia, the dividends, you would quickly see that we should have that money anyhow.

So, yes, there is a lot of bad. There's no question that we've got a big bill. But there's a lot of blame to go around. The project was ill managed from day one. It was ill managed by this government for the last eight years and here we are today. Yet, the finger gets pointed across the hall every single time. Well, I'll tell you, if you go out and you look at the pictures of what got sold off, you'll know it was mismanaged.

Talk to Ritchie Bros; they made a fortune. If you go out and look at the 4,000 sea cans that got sold off, you'll know that we made a big mistake. There are lots of mistakes. A \$1.3-billion time and materials contract given to a company out of Quebec. Time and materials for remediation on the north abutment that could have been done by any civil company in this province on a lump-sum basis. There were bids. Instead, we

gave it to a company from Quebec, time and materials. Kiewit came in in the middle; lump-sum solution, turned down by this government – lump-sum solution to complete the project, turned down.

So we can talk about all the blame, what it is, but we can't be green and be anything else. So Muskrat Falls can be either our saviour or it can't. When the Premier refers to Disney and how attractive Muskrat Falls has made this province, then we can't come in here and listen to everyone else talk about how it's our biggest burden.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pinch-hitting for the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis who is attending a family matter.

So we cannot talk about the Resource Committee without, at least, saying something about Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. The Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, earlier this evening, used the term facts matter. Facts do matter. In fact, the full story matters and you cannot just select bits and pieces of statistics that are going to make it appear that you're making more progress than you are.

We've heard the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills talk about the number of quarters where we've seen the population increase and that's a good thing, but you have to look at the full picture. If you look at Statistics Canada from quarter one 2022 to quarter one 2023, five consecutive quarters, the population in Newfoundland and Labrador increased by 1.6 per cent. In New Brunswick, it increased by 3.1 per cent, double. In Nova Scotia it increased by 3.3 per cent, more than double. In PEI it

increased by 4 per cent. So during the same time period, yes, Newfoundland and Labrador saw an increase in population but it's not keeping pace with the Atlantic provinces.

If you look at the numbers for 2022, Stats Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest number of immigrants in Atlantic Canada. The lowest number, lower than Nova Scotia, lower than New Brunswick, lower than PEI. In fact, in comparison to the population, Newfoundland, which has about 1.5 per cent of the population of the country, took in around 0.5 per cent of immigrants. So we're taking them in, and no one is disputing that. But when you look at the full picture, when you look at all the facts, we're being outpaced by every other province when it comes to this.

If you're looking at the population over a number of years, when the PC government came into power in 2003, the population was on a freefall. By 2007, we saw that turn around; 2007 to 2008 to 2009 to 2010 to 2011 to 2012 to 2013 to 2014, all yearly increases in the population of this province. Of course, in 2016, the current government came in place and, by 2017, our population was going where? Down. It was going down. It went down from 2017 to 2018, from 2018 to 2019, from 2020 to 2022, down, down, down.

It's interesting that the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville is claiming we gutted the department. Let me tell you. The immigration file was a file over at Executive Council. That's where it was. That file came over to the, then, department of skills and labour. In fact, it landed on my desk, the PC government at the time. They instituted a division to deal with immigration. They did that. We saw the numbers go up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: So you can talk about gutting whatever you want, but it was brought in by a previous PC government.

Why did the numbers go up? It probably wasn't just because of that. We had the Poverty Reduction Strategy. We were dealing with the social determinants of health back then. That's not some new phenomenon. We were dealing with that and if you're looking at population growth here in the province, there's a full equation you've got to look at.

There's natural growth and there's immigration. Natural growth is fertility rate over natural rate, birth rate, fertility rate. For many years now that equation for mortality rates have been outpacing fertility rates by about 500, approximately, give or take. There's been nothing done to change that, despite myself getting up in this House and talking to things like IVF, which would give families in this province the opportunity to raise a family and stay here. Then you have interprovincial migration within Canada, moving back and forth, and that's pretty even. Then we move to international migration, which are our immigrants. So that's the ones we brought in.

One would argue that our recent increases have been on the backs of what's been happening in the Ukraine. And, again, I say to you, in 2022, we had the lowest number of immigrants in Atlantic Canada.

So then we look at the stats that will tell you, five years out, we have less – less than half our immigrants are still here. Most of them are probably gone to MTV: Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

So I'm not criticizing here because we have seen five or six quarters of population growth, but it's year over year over year growth that we need to deal with. That's where we really see success.

Are we started in the right direction? Maybe. A couple of years down the road we'll learn. But if we really want to be successful, we have to look at the other parts of that equation. We have to look at how do we increase the fertility rate in this province,

because I guarantee you, Newfoundlanders who had a family and raised a family in this province are going to be here in five years. They're going to be here in five years.

I was happy to get up and speak on behalf of the Member for Cape St. Francis because immigration and population growth are extremely important for our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, the motion is that the report of the Resource Committee be concurred in.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, Report of the Resource Estimates Committee, carried.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: 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 p.m. tomorrow.

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