



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 65

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Thursday

April 18, 2024

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Before we begin this afternoon, in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome Sarah Trowbridge, who will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon. She's with her parents Denise and Ralph Trowbridge.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** Also, in the public gallery today, joining us for a Member's statement, are the organizers of the Newfoundland and Labrador Sketch Fest.

Welcome.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia - St. Mary's, St. George's - Humber, Stephenville - Port au Port, St. John's Centre, Placentia West - Bellevue and Burgeo - La Poile, with leave.

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, Lions Club International is the world's largest service club organization in the world, in existence since 1917.

On March 30, I joined members of the Dunville Lions Club as they celebrated their 50th Charter banquet. In the Dunville-Placentia area, when you say the Lions Club, residents immediately connect them with their namesake, the Lions Manor Nursing Home, and all they did to make that facility a reality for the people of the area.

The dedication and unwavering commitment of volunteer Lions members to serving communities has had a profound positive impact on the lives of countless individuals.

The Placentia area Christmas parade, the Happy Tree, fundraising to assist individuals purchase medical equipment, ongoing support for the local fire department with contributions towards life-saving equipment and their partnership with the Town of Placentia to ensure that the Wellness Centre became a reality are a few highlights of the Lions Club members' dedication to making the community a better place.

Dunville and Placentia Lions Club members, your legacy of service and commitment to our community has not gone unnoticed.

Congratulations to the Dunville Lions Club on their 50th anniversary.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

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

Myself and the Member for Placentia didn't coordinate this, but we both have a Member's statement on the Lions Club.

Speaker, growing up in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, the Lions Club was a main service organization in the community.

Recently, I had an opportunity to represent the provincial government at a regional convention in Corner Brook for Lions Club representatives from all over the province and to be reassured of the continued good work this organization does throughout our province and indeed around the world.

Like other MHAs, when I look around the district I represent, I see very vibrant Lions Clubs doing amazing things. These Lions Clubs are holding speaking competitions, sponsoring guide dog training, funding the

Lion Max Simms Memorial Camp, donating to other community groups, hosting events, organizing winter carnivals and many other things.

Speaker, earlier this year, I also attended a Charter Night for new Lions Clubs on the West Coast. It's encouraging to know that the Lions Clubs continue to be innovative and accommodating the different ways people volunteer and also reaching out to students at post-secondary institutions.

I ask all Members of this House of Assembly to join with me during National Volunteer Week in expressing our thanks for the members of the Lions Clubs for the work they do.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Vibrant communities just don't happen, they are created by hard work and dedication of its community members. Community Cafe is an example of how one community initiative is helping to bring people together in Stephenville.

Community Cafe is a gathering place where people from all walks of life can meet and have conversation over a nutritious meal prepared by local service organizations. The cafe provided the opportunity to alleviate some of the social isolation experienced by individuals who would otherwise not have the opportunity to get out and socialize or have a hot meal.

Since its inception in 2011, Community Cafe has grown to include these organizations: the Zion Pentecostal Church, the Stephenville Lions Club, the Knights of Columbus and the Royal Canadian Legion. What this means is that patrons can avail of

a home-cooked meal on Thursday of each week, which usually consists of soup, sandwich, roll and dessert.

COVID was a challenging time for Community Cafe; however, some organizations were determined to reach out to community members by offering a drive-through option, which was well received.

Thank you to all the businesses for providing the food, the organizations and, most importantly, the volunteers for keeping community spirit alive and well.

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

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

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

I rise today in this House to congratulate the organizing team and participants of the inaugural NL Sketch Fest on a successful festival.

In a province that is deeply rooted in sketch comedy, surprisingly there was a lack of spaces for performers to explore and get involved with the medium. Noticing that gap, a group of artists came together to fix it. NL Sketch Fest featured 20 shows spanning five nights and featured sketch comedians from Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Quebec and even Washington, DC.

One of the come-from-away comedians described the festival saying: It was like someone invited us into their home. With over 100 people involved, including sketch comedians, volunteers and organizers, NL Sketch Fest was one of the largest gatherings of sketch comedians in the province's history.

Aiming for inclusivity, the festival features a newfound sketch night, which allowed performers to explore the art of sketch comedy, performing for their first time in front of a supportive and full audience.

Congratulations to Andrew, Stef, Lucas, Lonni, Jana, Azal, Anna, Bailey and Luke for coming together, volunteering their time and turning their passion for sharing our art and culture into opportunities for all. I look forward to year two.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Today, I stand in this hon. House to recognize Ms. Sarah Trowbridge of Sunnyside in the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

Prior to beginning her studies at Memorial University, Sarah received a five-year athletic scholarship to play volleyball. This commitment demands an immense amount of time. Despite the demanding schedule, she prioritized her academic pursuits equally with her athletic ones.

As a result of her efforts, she received numerous awards this past year, which include: Bachelor of Commerce dean's list, top 10 per cent recipient for the 2022-23 academic year; Academic All-Canadian Award 2022-23 year, receiving an 80 per cent average or higher while playing a varsity sport; Memorial University's Women's Volleyball MVP for the 2023-2024 season.

Sarah believes it is essential to share her knowledge and experience that she has accumulated over the years and now devotes her time to coaching various volleyball events and currently serves as the coach for the U15 female volleyball team, who will be competing at nationals in Edmonton.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of the 50th General Assembly to please join me in

congratulating Ms. Sarah Trowbridge on her great accomplishments to date and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile, with leave?

Does the Member have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues.

It was on April 1, 1949, that our province celebrated Confederation with Canada. At 11:30 p.m., the evening before, Eva Roberts of Channel-Port aux Basques went into labour. As the men gathered outside to fire off their shotguns to celebrate the new union, a midwife delivered Eva's baby, Joseph Cecil Roberts, born at 12:05 a.m. on April 1, 1949 –

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

**A. PARSONS:** – the first child born after Confederation.

Joe's parents, Eva and Hartley, named him after Premier Joseph Smallwood and the former premier officially recognized him in 1974 when he came to town during 25th anniversary celebrations.

In 1999, during 50th anniversary celebrations, Marine Atlantic, his employer for almost 40 years, held an event in Joe's honour. He also received acknowledgement by former Premier Brian Tobin, who announced him as the first male Canadian born in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Joe married Karina Hewlin on October 5, 1968, and they have two children: Jeff and Jason. He currently resides with his wife in the Codroy Valley, where they moved after his retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join with me recognizing Joseph Cecil Roberts as being the first baby born in Newfoundland and Labrador after Confederation and wish him both a belated 75th birthday and a continued happy retirement.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise to share an update on the provincial government's successful Electric Vehicle (EV) Rebate Program.

Electric vehicles play an important role in the transition to a cleaner environment and a low-carbon economy. The number of battery electric vehicles in the province has increased more than 1,000 per cent since 2018.

The rebate program is intended to increase accessibility for residents seeking to obtain an electric vehicle. This program provides a \$2,500 rebate for consumers who purchase or lease an all-electric vehicle, and a \$1,500 rebate for those who purchase or lease a plug-in hybrid vehicle. *Budget 2024* includes an additional \$875,000 to support the continuation of this program. It also includes \$1.1 million to support EV infrastructure.

In 2023-24, 750 rebates – 458 of which were battery electric and 292 plug-in hybrid

electric vehicles – were approved. And I am pleased to say that we are averaging about two new electric vehicles on the road in this province each and every day. Over the past three years since the program's inception, over 1,300 rebates have been issued.

Switching to an electric vehicle means reducing greenhouse gas emissions, burning less fossil fuels and, overall, less pollution to the environment. With an EV, consumers can save up to approximately 70 per cent of the energy costs for an all-electric and up to 50 per cent of the cost for a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle, depending on factors such as the number of kilometres driven, fuel prices and the type of vehicle.

Speaker, our government remains committed to supporting significant investments and initiatives to reduce the province's carbon footprint.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

In response to the hon. minister's update on the EV rebate program, we must acknowledge that the success narrated doesn't quite align with the everyday reality of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The reported increase in EVs may seem promising, but a mere 4.4 new vehicle registration for hybrids and electric vehicles are slow uptake compared to others.

Moreover, the current rebate program favours the affluent without considering income disparities, undermining equitable access to clean transportation.

The issue of supply still looms large, with affordable models being out of reach for

many. The minister speaks of new charging stations, yet fails to mention the queues and the necessity of a credit card to access these services. This is not the universal accessibility that was promised.

While investments in EVs and their infrastructure are commendable and necessary for our environmental goals, the administration must acknowledge and address the program's limitations. The climate crisis waits for no one, and neither should our actions,

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

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

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

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

There is still a lot of need for infrastructure when it comes to charging and it continues to be a deterrent for many people who are looking at EVs in rural parts of this province. What will also help people save and reduce emissions is proper investment in regional municipal public transportation. We need to look at a more holistic approach when it comes to offsetting our carbon footprint from things from fast charging but also infrastructure when it comes to public transportation.

I hope the minister takes this into consideration with the budget.

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

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

I rise today to acknowledge April as Daffodil Month.

Daffodil Month is a national fundraising campaign of the Canadian Cancer Society. Volunteers raise vital funds through the sale of daffodils and daffodil pins to fight against cancer.

This month, the Canadian Cancer Society is asking the public to help people with cancer live longer, fuller lives.

The daffodil is an emblem of hope, a unifying symbol that brings us together to change the future for people affected by cancer.

We have all been impacted by cancer in some way, shape or form. It's a disease that knows no boundaries; a disease that has no limits. That is why it is so important to recognize Daffodil Month, as cancer affects everybody.

We appreciate the incredible work of the Canadian Cancer Society and the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Care Foundation. The society and foundation have been providing numerous supports and services for people throughout this province for a long time.

Our government is also dedicated to helping improve access to quality cancer care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We have world-class health care professionals working throughout the province making a difference in the lives of people and families who've been impacted by cancer.

I ask all hon. Members to join me as we help hope bloom and work to make a difference in the lives of people affected by cancer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I join my colleagues in proudly wearing our daffodil pins to acknowledge Daffodil Month. For so many years, the daffodil has come to recognize hope for patients and families alike.

Speaker, cancer has touched virtually every family in Newfoundland and Labrador. Thanks to the incredible efforts of the Canadian Cancer Society and the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Care Foundation, cancer patients in this province are living longer and with better quality of life. They are to be commended for their efforts.

I also note the minister mentioned quality cancer care and I would be remiss if I did not mention the excessive wait-list for MRIs, which is a significant diagnostic tool for cancer care and the ongoing delays with the cancer treatment program at the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital, which still lacks staff to open, years after being promised by this government.

So, Speaker, while I celebrate Daffodil Month, along with my colleagues, I also encourage government to provide the tools to fight it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement and join him in recognizing April as Daffodil Month.

The Canadian Cancer Society lists our province as having the second-highest per capita rate of diagnosis and the second-highest mortality rate from cancer of any

province. That's a significant statistic.

I do want to thank the Canadian Cancer Society then for its efforts in fundraising and research, the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Centre for the treatment it provides, and the Daffodil Place, which is in my district, for providing a place to live for families who have to travel in out of town for cancer treatment. They perform tremendous work and I want to thank all three bodies for that.

Thank you.

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

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

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

I ask the Premier: Can you confirm that you are collecting HST on the carbon tax?

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

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

As the Member opposite knows, the harmonized sales tax follows a formula that the federal government has total control over. HST is collected on carbon tax. The Member opposite is aware of that. We have no control over what harmonized sales tax is applied.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So, Speaker, basically the Liberal government is benefiting from a tax

on a tax that the carbon tax has created, taking more money out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the Premier: How much revenue do you anticipate to collect from HST on carbon tax?

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

**S. COADY:** Well, Speaker, I take exception to what the Member opposite just said. In this House of Assembly, this government has taken over eight cents per litre off provincial gas tax.

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

**S. COADY:** Eight cents per litre. This is in response to the fact that there is carbon tax now going on to the price of gasoline, Speaker.

We're very concerned about that. We've spoken to the prime minister about that. We have asked for him to stop adding more burden on to the people of the province. That's why we've taken eight cents per litre, giving up in the coffers of this government almost \$70 million.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, what I can tell you what's happening and taking exception to is the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are taking exception to the significant amount of money coming out of their pockets to pay for carbon tax –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – and to pay for sugar tax.

With all of the letters that the minister has alluded to that they've written to their prime minister, have they written a letter asking

the prime minister to stop charging HST on carbon tax?

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

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

The Member opposite didn't even support the budget.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** The budget is part of the documents that lowers the eight cents per litre on gasoline. Speaker, it is something that this government has been very, very focused on. You can recall budget after budget after budget where we've not raised taxes. We've not raised fees.

We have put \$500 million back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because we're concerned about affordability. The Member opposite knows that we're doing an awful lot to help the people of this province. He also knows that we're going to continue to focus on this.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Again, Speaker, I simply asked: Have you written the prime minister to ask him to stop charging HST on the carbon tax?

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

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

**S. COADY:** Budget after budget after budget – that the Member opposite does not support, Speaker – does not support – has not raised taxes; has not raised fees; has frozen all of it, Speaker. We have put \$500 million back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.



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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

When the Members are ready (inaudible).

The hon. the Deputy Premier; you got 25 seconds.

**S. COADY:** Members opposite haven't even supported those initiatives, Speaker. Eight cents per litre off the cost of gasoline, that's taking money out of the coffers of government and putting it directly back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We've also cut in half the cost it is to register your vehicle. We've removed the tax on home insurance. We have done tremendous measures to ensure affordability for Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, let's talk about support. So the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation said in this House – and I quote – I do support a price on carbon. I think it's important.

I ask the Premier: Do you agree with your minister?

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I think if the hon. Member would look back at the date and time of that question and I'm not sure what it was –

**B. PETTEN:** It doesn't matter.

**S. CROCKER:** It does. I say to the Member for CBS, it does matter.

**B. PETTEN:** It doesn't matter.

**S. CROCKER:** If the Member from CBS would let me finish, I could finish my answer.

I can almost – I don't know exactly when that statement was, but I can tell you one thing when that statement was. There was no tax for fishermen. There was no carbon tax for farmers. Gasoline was probably around \$1.20 a litre.

We do not need a carbon tax today, Mr. Speaker. Gasoline is almost \$2 a litre and that is suppressant enough to stop people from using carbon. One other thing – when I would have made that statement, there was no tax on home heating fuel.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker the biggest difference at the time was the fact that the Liberal government opposite was collecting all the revenue from the carbon tax.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure said in this House: "The carbon tax is the right policy instrument, and we need to stick with it, come high or low, when it comes to how popular it is or it is not."

I ask the Premier: Do you agree with your minister?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I find it ironic that we're here in the provincial Legislature – in the provincial Legislature – barely a question from the Opposition in the past

week on the budget for '24-'25. Obviously, they have not really thoroughly investigated that budget.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** I heard them in the House all this week. They were talking about things that are contained in the budget: \$42 million for poverty reduction; \$10 million additional money, these are new monies, for seniors, Speaker.

Yet, all I hear the Member opposite talk about is a federally imposed carbon tax that we do not support.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, clearly the minister simply didn't want to answer the question once again, so let me try another question.

Again, I ask the Premier: Do you know how much HST you collect on your costly sugar tax?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I find it really interesting that the Member opposite would speak against the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Diabetes society, the Canadian Paediatric Society, the World Health Organization –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** – that all say, putting a price on sugar-sweetened beverages, making sure that people are aware of the impacts to their health, is critically important. I'm surprised

because I know the Member opposite supports a tax on cigarettes.

I know he would support the tax on cigarettes for the very same reason we are putting a tax on sugar, because it's not good for you.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, they introduced their sugar tax with a thing that said they were going to modify people's behaviour.

About the only thing they modified is their pocketbooks because the whole cost –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** If they were really successful, we wouldn't be collecting revenue. We'd have zero revenue. That hasn't happened.

So again, I ask the Premier: Will you cancel and stop the sugar tax?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, the same logic applies. When the tax went on cigarettes, it took some time for that to permeate through and for behaviours to change.

With the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, again, supported by the Canadian Diabetes society, the Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Paediatric Society, the World Health Organization, all these organizations who've come out very strongly and said putting a price and making sure that we bring attention to the impacts of sugar-sweetened beverages is critically important – critically important.

So I say to the Member opposite, you keep confusing – I know it might be confusing to them, it's not to me as Minister of Finance –

the numbers in 2022 and the numbers in 2024. We're starting to see some change –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, with all due respect, you tell that to the single mother of three who paid \$11 on a \$4 purchase of fruit punch in sugar tax; \$11 in sugar tax.

When will you stop this nonsense and axe the tax?

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

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

**S. COADY:** I thank the Member opposite for the question.

I can say, all people in this province have a choice. What we're pointing out is make a responsible choice. Sugar-sweetened beverages – it is not me saying it, it is medical professionals at the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian diabetes association, Canadian Paediatric Society, the World Health Organization are saying to lower the content of sugar in your diets and the biggest contributor is sugar-sweetened beverages, so make an alternate choice. That is what this is about.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I remind the minister –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** Members in this House should realize the problem a lot of people got is they can't afford the healthier choices. This is a cost-of-living issue.

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's a sad statement, but that's a true statement.

Speaker, I have been contacted by an individual who underwent major surgery in February at the Health Sciences complex. This person has provided pictures they took, which I will table later, that show the filth, garbage and rat feces in the hospital room.

Speaker, is this an appropriate level of cleanliness in the province's biggest hospital?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I would say the answer to that is no, but I would be happy to look into that with the provincial health authority.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, this individual was at risk of infection and was appalled at the poor conditions in the patient areas. They counted no less than four rodent traps in their private room and when moved a bedside table, old food was rotting and garbage was underneath.

Is this acceptable to the minister or is this another operational issue that he will deflect and I will have to ask David Diamond?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat the answer to the last question because it is the same to this question. It is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. I will take it up with the provincial health authority to see if improvements can be made.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the Health Sciences Centre is only tertiary care facility in the province and it's almost 50 years old. The individual also took photos on the ward, which show holes in the wall, water damage and tape covering other issues.

Again, rather than build a newer St. Clare's hospital, why doesn't the minister invest to cleanup and repair the Health Sciences Centre?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Is the Member opposite suggesting we don't need a new St. Clare's, Mr. Speaker?

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Well, the Member opposite is asking, why don't we fix up the biggest hospital we have in the province?

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

**B. PETTEN:** The Member opposite might also add, maybe he needs to get more staff so he can fill up a new hospital, because we have one out in Corner Brook they can't staff right now.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Maybe that's what the minister should be following up on.

Speaker, we all know the Premier loves photo ops, but perhaps instead of building more, it's time for major redevelopment of the province's only tertiary care centre. The Health Sciences Centre is not even mentioned in *Budget 2024*.

When is the Liberal government going to stop putting band-aids on the Health Sciences Centre?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Member has been over to the Health Sciences complex recently, or if he's listened to any of the announcements by the provincial health authority or the provincial government. There are major renovations happening at the Health Sciences complex, Mr. Speaker.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** They are ongoing. Anybody who's visited the Health Sciences complex will see that. There's a major rehaul of the emergency department to make improvements. There's a new Cardiovascular and Stroke Institute being built, Mr. Speaker.

Again, is the Member saying we don't need a new St. Clare's because we are doing the work to the Health Sciences complex?

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Yes, Speaker, I don't know where St. Clare's is in the Health Accord, but people deserve to be treated in a clean, safe and healthy environment.

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

**B. PETTEN:** I'm all for repairs and upgrades, but this is not acceptable and the pictures I got, I'll table later, show otherwise.

One final question for the minister. Seeing tomorrow morning we have Estimates in this House, will you commit to bringing Mr. Diamond in to answer questions we may have, as you have referred to 27 times as operational issues? Will you commit to having him come in the House tomorrow morning for Estimates?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I don't control Mr. Diamond's schedule. I do know that the deputy minister has reached out to him. I'm not sure of his availability for tomorrow, but we will have a full complement of staff here from the department. Whether or not Mr. Diamond is available, there will be a full complement of staff here.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** He should listen because the Premier committed to it. He don't understand operational stuff. He don't know how to control the staff. I don't think he knows what's going on.

Speaker, yesterday in the House, when I asked the minister about driver medicals for seniors without a family doctor, the minister said they have a program to provide refunds for those who use a private nurse practitioner. Speaker, perhaps the minister was not aware that program ended August 25, last summer.

Again, what are seniors supposed to do to get a driver's medical if they do not have a family doctor?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, as I'd mentioned yesterday, individuals who have gone to a nurse practitioner, if they don't have access to primary care in their area where a doctor can sign off, if they don't have a doctor or if there is not a walk-in clinic, I'll certainly be happy to have a look at that again for this year.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** It's no good to have a look at something when people can't drive. In rural Newfoundland, where I live, and there are 150,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that don't have a family doctor, it don't do them very good.

Speaker, seniors in my district registered with the Health Hub two years ago and still haven't gotten a call back. Again, the Minister of Service NL says contact Health; Health refers people to a program that doesn't exist.

When is this minister going to clean up the mess?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Member opposite has been paying attention to anything that's been happening, but we have put in place virtual care through Teladoc. There have been a number of people referred from the wait-list through Patient Connect to Teladoc. There are more and more people being added each and every month to Teladoc so they have access to primary care.

Despite the fact that there are health human resource challenges, globally, certainly in each and every province in this country,

we've got a robust recruitment system in place. We are also putting in place things like Teladoc to ensure that people have access to primary care. We're putting Family Care Teams in place throughout the province. Maybe he should pick up a newspaper.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Maybe he should visit rural Newfoundland where people don't have access to Internet or family doctors.

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

**L. PARROTT:** It's pretty simple.

You tell a senior who doesn't have a driver's licence, who doesn't have access to Internet, to go to Teladoc and you tell me how they get their licence. They can't even get a birth certificate.

Speaker, even the Seniors' Advocate has expressed concern over the impacts on seniors due to doctor shortages. Motor vehicle registration is giving seniors the runaround, while Health and Community Services will not pay for medicals when seniors do not have any other options.

Again, why are the Liberals discriminating against seniors?

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

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

As I'd said on my first response to the questions, we will certainly have a look at whether or not we can provide coverage to individuals who do not have any other access to primary care. Mr. Speaker, we're happy to do that. If the program has expired, we will look into that with staff in the department, as well as the provincial

health authority, to ensure that there is nobody discriminated against.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, this morning a constituent required medical attention and a call was placed to 911. The volunteer department responded to provide initial medical assistance, but had to wait one hour and 31 minutes for the ambulance to arrive on scene.

I ask the minister: Why is this continuing to happen?

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

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

I know that each and every question so far is focused on things that we are doing to improve. As the Member opposite knows, we are putting in place ambulance integration because we know there are inefficiencies in the system. We know there are 60 different ambulance providers throughout the province. We know that there is no central dispatch, Mr. Speaker.

There are RFPs out for both air ambulance, as well as we're working on road ambulance, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that ambulance integration provides a better service to the people of the province as we move forward.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, the minister has to realize this is with Eastern Health ambulatory services and not a private service. I can tell you since 2013, when I

became involved in municipal politics, it's been an issue; this is now 2024.

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, the incident was in the Town of Pouch Cove, just 25 minutes outside the capital city. It wasn't in the District of Ferryland, when you have a two-hour drive to get to the incident.

Is the Liberal answer to crisis and ambulatory services downloading onto volunteer fire departments?

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

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

An ambulance integration will help everybody throughout the province including urban, Mr. Speaker, because when we have a better coordinated system with central dispatch and resources can be used in a more efficient manner, whether it's ambulance or human resources, everybody in the province will benefit.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, that's little consolation to the family who's loved one was on the floor waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

Speaker, it's not uncommon for Eastern Health ambulatory services to be in red alert or, now, it's wishing to be called a spike in calls more than usual, and you're put on a priority list.

Minister, what do you say to the family who had to wait 91 minutes for an ambulance to arrive to provide medical care and transport to their loved one, and what assurance can you provide to the family when the next call is made to 911 from my district?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know the situation of that particular case. Furthermore, we can't speak to individual cases. That long a wait, I will say myself, is unacceptable. That is something that we are hoping that through ambulance integration that we can improve the service province wide. It will also improve the services in urban areas, Mr. Speaker.

But if that situation happened, it is unacceptable and we will certainly look into, with the provincial health authority, the circumstances around that particular situation.

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

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

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

I certainly don't have to bring up what would happen if it was in Trepassey. I've been on this now for five years talking about ambulance services up there and what has happened, and it's ridiculous. Imagine if that happened to Trepassey today, two hours to get up and an hour and a half to come back – incredible.

Speaker, the minister has been making road announcements in the past few months, which are reannouncements and reannouncements. Many of local road improvements announced March 15 were announced back in 2022.

When is the minister going to stop looking backward and start moving forward to fix our roads?

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

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

I think it's fair to say that, in terms of the department and what we're doing, is obviously looking forward. We are paving quite a number of roads right across the province this year that have not seen pavement for quite a number of years. I take one example, the Witless Bay Line. We are paving the Witless Bay Line – something that Member has been advocating for since he's been here. We heard him. We are responding to it.

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

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

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

I was glad to see. The minister is in my district, so that's why it's getting paved, I guess.

Speaker, the minister should get an earth reward for recycling. This is the fourth anniversary of many of these announced projects. The Team Gushue Highway is another one and now has grass and alders growing up through it.

When will the tender be issued to finally finish this road?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, thank you, but I will say that road will bring me to Witless Bay.

We are finalizing the design on the Team Gushue Highway. A tender will be called this year and we anticipate construction starting later this year.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** They might have to do the brush cutting up there first before he gets to the road.

Speaker, the minister makes millions in announcements but all the public sees are constant delays, retendering, carryovers and reannouncements.

Before we twin the Trans-Canada Highway, can the minister at least finish the work that's been ongoing for years?

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

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

I'll start where I left off in the answer to his first question. We are very focused on making sure we get the work done that we have committed. We're working with our road construction industry to make sure we can get the best value for the work we need to get done. We have, this year – thanks to the Minister of Finance – \$288 million that is going to improve the roadwork in this province.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, months after a lucrative, sole-source contract to lease the Airport Inn, the government has discovered they don't have enough staff to run the facility. Now they have signed another contract with a private operator to run the facility.

Will the minister now admit there was never a concise plan when government signed a \$21-million deal with their Liberal friends?

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to address the question to the Member opposite.



Obviously when this was signed, I was not the minister, but I fully am aware of what went on behind the scenes in terms of trying to find a quick solution to get people into transitional supportive housing. Our partners who are going to take over this 106 Airport Road, former hotel, are well versed in dealing with folks who are homeless or facing homelessness and have complex needs.

It is something that they have agreed to do. We are thankful for that. We are working with them, and we're hoping to have people housed there in short order. We are working with them very closely and their community partners and we're going to continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, I'll ask the minister: How many people are actually at the location right now being housed and being serviced at that hotel?

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

**F. HUTTON:** Sorry, I think the question was how many people are at the hotel on Airport Road.

It's about 13 people but they were living there prior to the agreement that was signed between the provincial government and the former hotel owners.

They were there because they didn't have the same complex needs that others who are going to be moving in there will require. When we do get up and running with End Homelessness St. John's, there will be social workers on site, there will be nurses on site, there will be addictions councillors, there will be others who will be treating folks and helping them with their mental health issues that they may be facing at the time.

They are complex needs, Mr. Speaker. If we could get them in there any sooner, we would but we're working very hard to make that happen.

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

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

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

I received a text from a school counsellor in Central Newfoundland that counsellors were sent vision screening charts to complete on students referred for assessment. The same area of the province where we've had a cutback in children waiting for assessment by the pediatric clinician in Central Health.

I ask the minister if this is yet another example of failing to resource our schools or our health system and downloading yet another responsibility on teachers?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker, and appreciate the opportunity to give some important information to the House of Assembly or to anybody who may be listening.

When we consider the students who have special needs in our classrooms, it's important to note that resources or supports for those students doesn't rely wholly on an assessment process done by a provider, by a psychologist or some of the specialized professionals that may be included in the process.

Initially, when students are in our classrooms and it's recognized that there's an issue, because of our responsive teaching and learning processes in our classrooms, teachers have the ability to identify children who may have needs and then identify supports and resources that can be availed of immediately while they're

waiting for an official psychological assessment or some other assessment to unfold.

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

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

**J. DINN:** As we've already found out, the wait for any specialized health is interminable.

One time we had school nurses in the school system, public health nurses in the school system. They've been cut back over the years in my career, that's for sure.

Speaker, earlier today, the Department of Education announced reconfiguration of PWC, Larkhall, St. Andrew's and Leary's Brook school system. Usually, such reconfigurations are announced long before the end of the school year, usually around January or before, followed by extensive consultation with school communities with plenty of lead time. Two months before the end of the school year is not acceptable.

I ask the minister: Why now? What happened?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the question.

The schools that are being referenced in the release today have an ever-growing population of students. I'd like to give credit to my colleague in the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills for the significant work that has been done on immigration in this province and upping our population.

Our school systems have seen an increased number of children enrolling in our

K-to-12 classrooms. Therefore, consequentially, we have less room in some of our classroom spaces. It's important right now, in order to resource these classrooms appropriately for safety reasons and to make sure that students have actual space to live and learn, we look at reconfiguring how our classes look and what our schools look like. Then we want to have that ready for implementation in the fall.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, I've brought these issues up in the House over the years. The Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills cannot miss an opportunity to crow about the success.

Speaker, is the minister expecting me to believe that her department only became aware of the influx of newcomers in these schools recently? Why hasn't the minister been on top of these files, instead of causing the sudden upheaval for students and families?

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

**G. BYRNE:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do take a certain level of pride in the fact that Newfoundland and Labrador welcomes more vulnerable people from various places around the world, refugees, asylum seekers –

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

**G. BYRNE:** – people who need Newfoundland and Labrador. We are a welcoming place and I'm proud to stand with the Minister of Education as we provide for supports for families, for young children.

For the first time in decades, our school system is increasing with its student

population of students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**G. BYRNE:** So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we should all crow about the fact that we are a welcoming place for refugees and asylum seekers. Maybe the Leader of the Third Party should be more welcoming for refugees and asylum seekers as well.

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

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

**J. DINN:** I welcome newcomers to this province. What I also welcome more is that they actually have supports in the school system, which is terribly lacking.

Speaker, the integration of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and the Department of Education was supposed to find deficiencies and create efficiencies. Now, what's happening recently is not an efficiency, it has the potential of pure disruption this late in the game.

Is this what families and school communities can expect as a result of integration? Is this the efficiency that was promised because it is not efficient.

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker, again for the opportunity to respond to the question.

When we talk about supports of students and supports in our schools, I would remind the Member opposite that there is a \$3-million investment in student supports, student assistants that will be implemented in our classrooms after the budget has been voted on. So I am assuming that the Member is saying that he is going to support the budget this year.

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

**K. HOWELL:** But to speak to the fact of integration, earlier this year, we were able to bring the Newfoundland and Labrador school district into government and through that process we've recognized some efficiencies. Most of those right now are in our operational processes and how we conduct our business. Having everybody in the one space to work towards a common goal has brought us some great success in a lot of the issues that we have identified in our K-to-12 system.

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

**SPEAKER:** Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**SPEAKER:** Does the Member have leave to table a document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**B. PETTEN:** I'd like to table these documents I mentioned in Question Period, the pictures from the Health Sciences Centre, I'd like to table them for the House to see.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

**Notices of Motion**

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that not withstanding Standing Order 9 that this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I give notice that I will move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

**Petitions**

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

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

The reasons for this petition:

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

WHEREAS the district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, North River, Roaches Line and Makinsons, who have roads in

desperate need of repair and paving, specifically Route 60 and Route 70; and

WHEREAS these roads see high volume traffic flows every day and drivers can expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed out areas along the way.

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

Speaker, what is it going to take? What is it going to take to get the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to listen to the people of Holyrood, of Upper Gullies and Seal Cove who have to drive over Route 60? What is it going to take? Clearly, 14 petitions since 2019 that I've presented in the House of Assembly is not good enough.

Surely, having addressed this for four different ministers of this Liberal government since 2019, and still nothing done with this deplorable road, which keeps deteriorating year after year after year. If the minister will not listen to me, will the minister listen to the people?

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** The people who are so disappointed in Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove and others who have to drive over this despicable, deplorable and I would submit a dangerous road.

Speaker, the people are not only disappointed. They're insulted. They're insulted that \$1.4 billion of a five-year Roads Plan and yet they were overlooked in this Roads Plan this year.

Speaker, that is not acceptable. I've heard from the Seniors' Advisory Committee out in CBS. I've heard from the councillors in the Town of CBS. I've heard from Holyrood town council as well. Before he can respond, I know that he had a meeting with the Town of Holyrood, just last week, which I might add he didn't have the courtesy to even invite the local MHA, being me. I would submit, I arranged for him to come out and have the meeting before with the town. He didn't have the courtesy to do that.

Speaker, this is unacceptable. We are going to have to resort to other collective action; maybe protests will get some answer.

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

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

**J. ABBOTT:** There was a lot of language, a lot of stuff in the petition, but, Speaker, just to add to the record, I guess, I have heard from the Member in terms of roads, both Route 60 and others in her district, and we will be paving and improving Roaches Line, as an example.

But that being said, as we talked about the meeting with the mayor and some of the councillors in Holyrood, I did the same with the mayor and deputy mayor in Conception Bay South. We are focused on how we can improve Route 60, but the caveat to that is that some of Route 60 are local roads in those communities and I want those municipalities to talk to me about we can work together to improve Route 60.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Residents on Route 350, 351A and 352 in the Exploits District are concerned with the road conditions on these routes causing safety issues and damages to vehicles.

We, the undersigned, encourage the House of Assembly to immediately have the roadwork contracted to upgrade and improve the conditions of these routes.

Speaker, I've had many conversations with the former ministers, emails and conversations with the current minister. I think this would be the fourth one now. I understand the routes in the district are in deplorable condition. If some of this work is outside the scope of the department, maybe some of it can be contracted out to get this roadwork done quicker.

If not, the minister certainly needs to put some work in the Roads Plan for those areas, especially in zones, the 40- to 60-kilometre zones going through the communities, potholes. This kind of weather now, I can hear the phone calls next week – but I'm pleased to see in the Roads Plan that I am getting one culvert in those areas. I'm really impressed – one culvert.

The Member for Ferryland brought up the announcements and reannouncements in the budget. I'd like to get a reannouncement right now. I'd settle for that.

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

**P. FORSEY:** That roadwork certainly needs to be done.

I encourage the minister to come out in the Exploits District and let's take a look at it.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**J. ABBOTT:** One thing I will not commit to is a preannouncement on any future work.

But that being said, we hear the Member, we are doing some work in his district and we will continue to focus on making sure the work continues to be upgraded. I believe there is next year, and there's a following year and the year after that. We have a five-year plan. We have \$1.4 billion. It cannot all get done in year one, so just stay tuned to year two, three, four and five.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

I stand again on another petition.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: Amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor (a) within an intimate relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim – the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred, that is was caused by or contributed by an act or omission, or that the act or omission was that of the defendant; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

I stand again today, Mr. Speaker, to present this petition on behalf of Mr. Whalen and his family and all the other ones that were abused. I just want to let the House know

Mr. Whalen today went through discovery. So the people in this House of Assembly now are allowing a person, again, to go through discovery to be questioned by lawyers who are trying to stop this on a regular basis, and here we are in this House of Assembly where it's just recently been brought up about people being retraumatized.

**P. LANE:** What lawyers are doing it?

**E. JOYCE:** The provincial and federal lawyers.

**P. LANE:** Provincial government lawyers?

**E. JOYCE:** Provincial government lawyers.

And here we are as legislators could have this changed by consent within one minute. And it's all over money. It's all over money. Just think about it.

I ask the Liberal government; the Liberal government was for the common person. The Liberal government always was for the person who was downtrodden, always for the common person. That's the values of Joey Smallwood. That's the values that you grew on the Liberals. That's why I supported the Liberals since I was 12 years old. That was our values. But here we have an opportunity to do this and it's a great opportunity for the Legislature to come together. It's a great opportunity for the Premier, because it's the Premier's decision. It is the Premier's decision.

I'm sure there are questions that have to be raised about it. There's absolutely no doubt about that. But I'll say to the Liberal government and I say to the Premier, the Premier of this province, you have the authority, you will have unanimous consent in this House, you would show leadership for New Brunswick if you do that.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I say to the people who always ran on the Liberal values, this is one example that you can show the Liberal values are alive and well.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**L. EVANS:** This a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state that there is no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Various forms of child abuse often co-occur and are highly interrelated. Treating child sexual abuse differently from non-sexual child abuse for limitation period purposes is inconsistent with the shift in society's awareness and the understanding of the damaging effects of child maltreatment.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures those responsible for these heinous acts can be held accountable, regardless of how much time has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice, and ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland and Labrador's approach to child abuse claims in line with human rights standards and the revised statutes in most other provinces.

Speaker, I presented this petition yesterday and I ran out of time because we only have three minutes. I was going to begin to speak a little bit about why this petition is so important and speak a little bit about the advocate that has brought this forward.

But I just want to clarify something yesterday when I read the petition. I did say that I asked in Justice budget Estimates: Has the department done any preparatory work to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove the statute of limitations in cases of child physical abuse?

Now, I asked that question. It was exactly worded as it is. At 56 minutes into the audio of Estimates, I think was the assistant deputy minister of legal services who spoke and she said that she can confirm some prep work is being done to look at this issue.

We look at that as a positive thing, but we could go back through *Hansard* because we should hold this government accountable. If they are doing the work, the work needs to be done. We look at other provinces. Other provinces know the harm being done to adults now who were seriously harmed while they were in care or custody under the authority of adults that were affiliated with the province, with government agencies.

We also realize how trauma impacts people and we only give them so much time after they become an adult. It can take years for people to be able to get to a place where they can actually speak out and take action for themselves. This is why this statute is so important to be taken off the records. We need to get it – anyway, I am out of time.

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

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the safety and well-being of the residents of Trepassey, have accessibility to

an ambulance in the time of emergency and meet national standard response times.

I did hear the minister today say they're looking at the ambulance issue going forward with central dispatching and all that kind of stuff.

We heard the Member for Cape St. Francis today talking about an ambulance taking 1 hour and 31 minutes to get there. If they were in Trepassey and that happened today, when they go into red alert, which you're not allowed to use. Well, I'm going to continue to use it. I don't care what they tell me to say. It's a red alert and there's a red alert right across the country when it happens. It's two hours to drive to Trepassey; two hours to drive from Trepassey; you wait an hour and a half. So if you're two hours up and two hours back and if you're waiting, that's 4½ hours on a good day to be able to get down here to get to a hospital – incredible – incredible.

Some of the stuff that they did, they put out a rapid response unit in the area and I've seen it in certain areas. But people have to put in their mind in this House of Assembly, when the ambulance leaves Trepassey, today, this morning at 8 o'clock – they have no ambulance. It's in red alert. They have no ambulance that's there. They make a call. They don't know if it's going to come from St. Mary's, if it's gone in Cape Broyle or if its going to come from St. John's.

So when we were back listening to it, they called it dynamic dispatching. In all the time that the ambulance is gone, I have no idea what they meant about it. I don't know how it worked. Now they're going to put an ambulance or try to do a new ambulance or set up ambulances, that's the way they're going to be. We don't have any input on it. We'd like to know how it's going to work. How is it going to work for the people in Trepassey? How is it going to work for the people in Ferryland? How is it going to work for the people in Bay Bulls?

We don't have an ambulance in Bay Bulls, it comes from St. John's. So we're a minimum of half an hour getting an ambulance, unless we're lucky enough – I'm saying unlucky enough if you've got to call an ambulance – that they're driving back up the shore, they'll dispatch it and it might get there in 10 or 15 minutes.

We checked into it two years ago and they're telling us 15 minutes response time, 17 minutes. Not on your life. Not a chance. It doesn't happen. They put all this pressure on the volunteer fire departments in regions. And then they have to go out and try to raise money to do some training to be able to respond to these emergency health calls, not even fires, they're health calls, medical calls. So now they have to go out and get the training.

So let's get the government to get some funding for these volunteer fire departments so they can get the proper training to be able to help out as well.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

**SPEAKER:** We are now debating the amendment to Motion 1, the budget debate.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you.

I'm going to rise again to have my few words on the budget and this amendment



that was put forth and some of the concerns.

First of all, to the people of Bay of Islands, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity of representing you again and raising concerns on your behalf.

I'll say to the Member for Harbour Main, I heard the answer from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, how he's going to sit down with the mayors. He sat down with two mayors from York Harbour and Lark Harbour with the very dangerous situation with the gabion baskets and there was nothing done in the budget – absolutely nothing done in the budget. So, I'll say to the Member –

**J. ABBOTT:** (Inaudible.)

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**J. ABBOTT:** That's not true and you know that.

**E. JOYCE:** What?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the Member not to be talking back and forth, address the Chair.

**E. JOYCE:** I say to the minister, what I got in an email was that they're going to do a design of it. That's what I got in an email from your office. So it wasn't in the announcement; I have the announcements right here. It was not in the announcement. Then when I emailed, I got a response back and said, yes, it is in the landscaping or whatever. I said, well, that's great news. How much is put aside? Oh, we're going to do the design.

I'll forward the email to you, Minister. I will actually forward the email to you. I'm not standing up here and trying to beat on the government or beat on you because I think it is the right thing to do for politics. I'd be the first one out to congratulate you and say

thank you for making the road safe. I'm not here for politics; I'm really not.

I will send you the email, Minister. When I sit down, before the day is over, you will have the email where a person from – I won't say the person's name – your office said they're doing the design; the money is in the budget to do the design. That's what's there, honestly. I'll show it to you, Minister.

If the gabion baskets are actually done, the money is allotted for it and it is going to tender, I'll be the first one up here to say, thanks, you made the road safe. You did a good job of it. I would, but it's not and I'll show you the email. I'll send you the email.

I say to the Members opposite, and I don't think people understand the gravity of this here. I know there were a few people here that were in the government before and know how the process works. When there are recommendations made by the staff, the engineers go out and they do it by regions. That's the way it used to be, they do it by regions. When they do the recommendations by regions, then they put in the priorities that want to be done. Each region then takes their priorities, sends it in to government, each one is ranked, what their priority is, for the safety concerns, the amount, the number of traffic; it's done. What this government has changed is, right now, the ranking system now goes to Cabinet.

I applied on an access to information to get it. I can't get the ranking. So what I did, I'm just explaining – unless whoever made the mistake didn't send it to me – I asked for the ranking.

When we all stand up here and present petitions about the roads, the decision is made in Cabinet. This is not a decision that is done now by officials anymore. This is why when some people say, well, we see – I tabled the money yesterday, \$30 million in the Premier's district, \$29-something million, I tabled it.

**P. LANE:** How much?

**E. JOYCE:** I don't know, it was \$130 million spent and well over 10 per cent, 12 per cent, 15 per cent, I think, was spent in the Premier's district.

But we can never see if the projects were ranked and if they were a priority, we can't see it. This is why this is so political. I don't mind saying this, you're actually putting lives in danger. I really feel it. I feel strong about those gabion baskets. I feel very strong.

I know, I can tell you now, I speak to the officials out on the West Coast, they have their kids driving that road. They drive it themselves. They have their mothers, they have their fathers, they have their sons, they have their daughters, they have the school buses, that's why they're telling me they want it done. They know they put it in as a priority. They're using the roads and they're scared to drive.

That's the issue I'm trying to raise here. This is so political now, the road money. I can understand if it's not a priority, if it's not dangerous, okay, which way do we go, this one or that? I understand that. I understand the politics of it, but there has to be a way that we rise above the politics and put safety first. It has to be, absolutely has to be.

I was strong on that when I was with the Liberal government, and there are people here who know that used to come over and say okay, what's the priority and if it's a priority, it will be done.

Speaker, you were a part of the government, too, and you used to see the priorities for your own district – everybody. There are a few Members here from the PCs that were here at the time – no, there's only one, I think at the time, and you know we used to see the priority list. We used to get it. Ask for it and you get what was ranked and then you know.

You used to see it; I used to see it. We can't get it anymore, and what it is, is this secrecy of government. I'll say to Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, when you stated if you wanted a road done that you would walk in the Cabinet and say to the minister I want it done, to be put on and get it done, you are 100 per cent correct. Do you know why? Because you are in the Cabinet, and you used to see how it worked.

You used to see when the list come up and you'd sit around the Cabinet Table, 15 or 16 of them and they say okay, we want this, this, this. Okay, who's in the bit of trouble? This, this, this district, this district. That's the way it was done. What you said is correct, because you were part of it. You were sitting in the Cabinet and you seen how it was done.

I'm not saying what you said was wrong; I'm just saying that's the way that this government set up the process – absolutely. I applied for the ranking, and I couldn't get it.

So, I say to the minister, I tabled that document yesterday – you stood up and said there was a lot of things I said that wasn't true. I tabled that document yesterday, stand up and say the document is wrong or have the courtesy to stand up and say Eddie, you were right in what I said.

I know you won't do it. It takes courage to do it, I know. I know you won't do it, but I tabled a document just to show what I was saying was correct. I'm not up here trying to just, for some reason, embarrass the government. I am not doing that, but I'm adamant that it should be done on a priority basis. It should be done on a priority basis, but it's not being done now. It is done in Cabinet secrecy, and they say who is in trouble for the Liberal Party who all of a sudden needs a bit of help, and that's how the priority it done now. It's shameful.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's shameful.

**E. JOYCE:** It is, and I say when I hear the Members opposite talking about it here, nothing done.

I'll just give you an example, I heard it here today you were talking about preannouncement and there was one, Rouzes Brook bridge. It's not the government fault. It was started 2018-2019, I think, it's a small bridge and when they were digging down they ran into an artesian well and they couldn't get the water. That's in the budget this year, doing that work. Four years ago, all paid for and all it is now is just completing it.

The Lewin Parkway, the great job on the Lewin Parkway – they forgot some gables at the bottom and couldn't get them. That's what's still in the budget that they're doing for the Humber - Bay of Islands, which is not even Humber - Bay of Islands.

Then they put in something for St. George's - Humber, which is not even the Bay of Islands, to try to prop it up. Which is just wrong. It's just absolutely wrong. I say to the Minister of Finance yesterday you were shaking your head when I said the capital works this year is \$10 million. I'll read it, and I told the minister because I listened to her budget. I wasn't here, but I was listening to the budget. I'll just read it: "We are also investing \$50 million over five years to support water and wastewater projects." That's on page 18, so please don't say what I'm saying is wrong. Page 18, it's in there.

What happened – I'm not saying it's the government's fault – it's the first time in my memory there's no federal-provincial agreement for water and sewer. This \$10 million over five years was the capital works that they used to do fire hall buildings. They had no extra money, so they took that money now and what they did, they moved it into water and sewer. That's what's happening. That's exactly what happened. I had it confirmed – and I know the bunch in Lark Harbour-York Harbour are trying to get water in one spot there for the last three or

four years, nothing – absolutely nothing. Then you see all the announcements coming out because they're all made in Cabinet.

This is not on a priority anymore. This is absolutely not on a priority anymore. This is on a political basis. I said it yesterday and I'll say it –

**P. LANE:** All the white districts.

**E. JOYCE:** All the white districts, yeah.

It's sad. I understand politics. I understand that. If you've got something that's, okay, it's not a safety issue, safety concern or something, I understand we give it to districts because it's not a safety concern. But when you hear so many times about safety issues here and then there's just nothing being done and the reason why it's not being done is because the Premier makes the final decision in Cabinet.

I remember – and I'm going to make this statement here – when I stepped aside for Clyde Wells. I phoned him – I was never asked; I phoned him. I told him I was going step aside because the district was 5 per cent water and sewer. The district was neglected. It was. A rural district was neglected.

I remember saying one thing to Clyde Wells. Never asked for a job; didn't want a job. I remember saying to Clyde Wells: Will you take care of the district? It's all I said. His comment to me, was, Eddie, they'll never get no more than anybody else, but I guarantee you they won't get no less. I said: That's fair enough.

But when you sit down – and I tabled the document and I know anybody can look at it now, when the Premier of the province gets \$29 million and almost \$30 million in one fiscal year for his own district for towns that more people drive on the Route 450 going from Lark Harbour up to Corner Brook in one day than people drive there in a week

or a month and they get approved, it's definitely not on a priority basis.

**P. LANE:** And \$70 million divided over 39 other districts.

**E. JOYCE:** And \$70 million divided over the other 39 other districts.

There's something wrong.

**P. FORSEY:** Exploits is not included.

**E. JOYCE:** Exploits is not included.

To the Member for Exploits, that's the problem. What I'm saying here – and the minister has an opportunity to stand up and release the recommendations, but here's the recommendations. But I'm serious about that. The other Member who was speaking, that's why – Harbour Main, that's why. Is because the Cabinet makes the decisions. They're not going to come and say here's something for you when a few of their districts say we're bit behind in the polls and we have to do something. I'm serious on that. I know you don't believe it, but I guarantee you, you ask the minister to release the rankings here today, he won't do it and I'll ask him now, release the rankings.

Look at what I tabled yesterday, I'm sure it was already tabled, go look at it and it breaks down the Premier's district. Breaks right down for the Premier's district and you can see the difference. It's tabled because when I couldn't get the rankings, I asked district by district of the funding and that's what I got back. I got everybody's district and you will be shocked by it. You will be shocked, honestly. I'm not kidding here; this is a safety concern.

I'll leave that alone and I'll say to the minister, here's your opportunity to show that I'm wrong and produce right now, table the recommendations. Here you go. You're gonna send them to me?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Address the Chair.

**E. JOYCE:** I'm sorry about that. No, he was just talking again to me. I just thought he was going to say, here they are but obviously not.

I'll just leave that alone and I'll –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon?

No, I say there behind the Lohnes Complex between Georgetown Road and Allens Road is very serious too. I brought that up and I wrote the minister on that on numerous occasions on it. It's serious. I said everybody from Lark Harbour, York Harbour comes up and goes to work, 90 per cent goes up that road and it's dangerous. The ruts are about six inches deep in the road and it's dangerous. What they do, all they get \$454,000, I think, in the Bay of Islands. Every bit of it was patching. Go patch the holes. Actually no roadwork – absolutely none.

I'll leave that there for now and I'll look forward to the minister standing up and proving me wrong and producing the recommendations from the department staff. If they all match with the Premier's district, I say I'll stand up and say they were, but I know they're not, and I know we aren't going to see the recommendations because they're done in Cabinet.

The other few things I'm going speak about is housing. I know the Minister of Housing was out in Corner Brook and made a great announcement. Fifty new units there is a good announcement. I know the former minister was working on it. I know he wrote back and we spoke, too, on several

occasions to work on it. That's a good announcement. It's well deserved and that's something that we know in Corner Brook was well needed.

The former minister, who was in correspondence talking to me about it and explaining it, and I said before and I'll say it again, when he said the federal government didn't come through, I did get a letter saying that's true. They did not come through on the funding for it. I wrote the MP Gudie Hutchings on it and I got a letter back from the minister saying they did not select that project. You are 100 per cent right, but now the project is done.

That's great news for all Corner Brook and all the Bay of Islands because everybody is going to be able to avail of that housing that is there. I just got to recognize that as something that was well needed and well done in the district itself. So the two ministers, the former minister and this minister, good job. I appreciate it, well done.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is a bigger thing for me, the radiation unit. When the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure stood up yesterday and said I never said anything correct, except stand up was the only thing that was correct, look at the Premier's own personal statements where he said we do not have a radiation oncologist.

If you're going to say that I made the statements wrong when I held the document up with the Premier's own statement, have the courage to tell the Premier his statement was wrong, because I was reading his statement. I was reading the Premier's statement saying that they couldn't get one from Corner Brook. He was interviewed. I was reading his statement.

If the minister wants to try to criticize me and say the information that I have said in this House of Assembly – which hopefully with the ruling he's going to have to apologize on. For him to say that what I said

about the radiation unit, something so close to my heart, so close to a lot of people's heart out in Corner Brook, was wrong, what I said was wrong, tell the Premier he was wrong. Let's have the courage to say: Premier, you were wrong. We do have a radiation oncologist.

Here's the opportunity, but please don't go standing up and criticizing me for standing up for the people in Bay of Islands, and when I say the Corner Brook area that means the whole Corner Brook area. Half of Corner Brook is the Humber - Bay of Islands now, for the whole Corner Brook area and the Bay of Islands, the West Coast, Labrador and what I'm saying, pushing for a radiation oncologist, urging the government to continue on and do whatever you got to do, put in incentives, whatever you got to do to get it out there because it's so needed for the people – so needed.

So the next time the minister wants to say that I'm making those statements wrong, I'll even give him an offer. Apparently, he's the one always saying that what I'm saying about roads and the radiation is wrong. Let's go to Corner Brook. Let's go out and have a public meeting and tell them what I said was wrong, that you do have a radiation oncologist. Simple, let's go.

It's passionate for the people out there. When you stand in this House and you speak on behalf of the people you represent and you're presenting the facts, it's discouraging when someone stands up and says oh, everything you said was wrong when it's not, when it's so personal. Safety of the roads, it's so personal because I drive them. I know school buses, last year, had to turn around – school buses. So don't tell me that it is not a priority.

Don't tell me that what I said about radiation is not true because it is true. I'm urging the government – and I know the Member for St. George's - Humber is well aware of it. There's no radiation oncologist out there. There's not. I know it's hard to get a

radiation oncologist, but the government had four or five years. So I'm pushing the government to try to get a radiation oncologist. Do what you need to do to get a radiation oncologist and we all support it. We all support the radiation in Western Newfoundland. Everybody in this House is going to benefit, maybe from Grand Falls out, with the radiation, is going to benefit.

So, please, let's work together. When I stand up and bring up issues and try to put forward all the major concerns of the people in the district, I'm doing it on their behalf. I can tell you, until they say no, I'll continue to do it. Do you think someone's going to stand up and say, well, nothing he said is true, and going to stop me?

You've got the wrong guy, I can assure you. You have the wrong guy because I can tell you, I live in the area. I was born in the area. I'm going to die in the area and I'll tell you one thing until they say, Eddie, it's time to move on, I'm going to stand and raise the issues about it. I might get chirped – like yesterday, it was hard to speak with everybody shouting at me because of what I was saying was wrong. I know the Minister of Finance, page 18, I just read out about the capital works. So I wasn't saying anything that wasn't factual. Absolutely nothing that wasn't –

**P. LANE:** They don't want to hear they truth.

**E. JOYCE:** What?

**P. LANE:** They don't want to hear they truth.

**E. JOYCE:** They don't want to hear the truth. Then, I'll say to the minister in final: I'd love to work with you, but we've got to get the safety concerns done in the Humber - Bay of Islands before someone gets hurt and I don't want no one to get hurt, please. That's all I ask, please.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It is always a pleasure to stand and represent the people of my fine district and it is a privilege to speak to the amendment here on *Budget 2024*.

Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak to the main motion yesterday and my colleague from CBS spoke about working relationships and listening in this House of Assembly. Before I want to move forward, what I spoke on yesterday – I had my 20 minutes and spoke – I do know that there are Members opposite listening. After I spoke, I had a conversation with the Minister of Housing and, of course, with the Member for Mount Pearl North who, after I spoke, gave me some advice and some guidance and a little bit of direction and some assistance. So, before I go any further, I want to thank them for that because it proves that they're listening.

Speaker, when I came in here in 2021, one of the finest Members to sit opposite was the Member for Baie Verte - Springdale, for listening. He listened intently every day we were here in this House. I can assure you, yes, I know many Members opposite are listening and that is appreciated, because when we speak, we have something to say. We represent our district and our constituents, but it's nice to know and I go back to the former Member for Baie Verte - Springdale, he did always listen, so I appreciate that.

Speaker, I spoke yesterday with respect to the tent encampment and a young man who left HMP. Again, I thank my colleague from Mount Pearl North, I had it in my notes and I omitted to say it and I will say it now with respect to the fine work that the John Howard Society does with respect to individuals leaving HMP.

I would trust that the government are working closely with that fine organization, because the lack of housing affects released inmates who have nowhere to go. They unfortunately fall right back into the circumstances that they were in originally that found themselves incarcerated at HMP. Of course, addictions and crime are major in our communities today and the fine work that the John Howard Society, I hope, in working with the government will break that cycle.

With respect to specific mental health and addictions, on a rehabilitation lens, we need to make sure that these individuals are offered the wraparound services that ensures their safety and well-being and, of course, the safety of all our communities.

I did want to mention that, Mr. Speaker, because it is important. We do have to keep that first and foremost in mind when we have individuals who are coming out of HMP and they do need the services that government and, of course, the community provides.

Speaker, I was at an event last night in my district with respect to Volunteer Week. While I was there, I spoke to many seniors who heard me speak in the House yesterday, heard the debate that's going on and appreciated the fact that I said today that I would speak up about seniors and affordable housing. I've spoke about it before in this House with respect to constituents in my district, who lived in the district all their lives, who are functioning, contributing members of society and in their mid-70s find out that due to the cost of living, due to the increase of everything on a day-to-day basis, they can't live in their homes any longer. They just can't do it.

Unfortunately, I have residents who are moving to St. John's in a one-bedroom apartment to try to make ends meet. That is reality. That's a given and it's not just my district, I'm sure we're hearing that throughout the province.

The government promised a Poverty Reduction Plan targeted at seniors to come sometime soon, which is interesting, we are now in the last year of the government's mandate, but I want to know if the plan will include measures to help seniors find save, secure, accessible and affordable places to live. This is important, Speaker, because we have many people who are affected.

I'll only go back to the Seniors' Advocate report that came out in November of last year that we're all aware of. The Seniors' Advocate report back in November of '23 stated that "Thirty-two per cent ... of seniors throughout Newfoundland and Labrador reported that they don't have enough income to meet their financial needs and were unable to afford food, rent, medications and required medical services. This is contributing to poorer health outcomes and reduced quality of life."

I am hearing it. I'm seeing it in my district. It is difficult to listen to because there's only so much advice and help that we can give our seniors, as much as we would want to do more. Of course, we all know it's the golden years report, it refers to the indexing of the Seniors' Benefit here in Newfoundland and Labrador; reviewing both the maximum family net income threshold to receive the full Seniors' Benefit; exempting seniors in receipt of GIS from having to pay for their required home supports; exempting households with their family net income of \$29,402 from having to pay for their required home supports; implementing the Food First NL recommendation for a shared food delivery service to ensure food delivery can be made to seniors if necessary; increasing the amount of money per kilometre for travelling for medical appointments; and providing people over 65 free access to influenza vaccine.

So what the Seniors' Advocate is hearing is what we are hearing and her quote is: "Our research has shown that seniors in receipt of the full federal and provincial benefits cannot afford the necessities of life." Not all

seniors have the federal and provincial financial benefits; there are many out there that have far less than that. "The recommendations contained in this report are a starting point to begin to provide some financial relief to seniors living in low income, while ensuring they can access the supports and services they require to age well in their ... communities."

Speaker, I know full well, my mother is in this situation right now and, of course, we'll do whatever we can for our loved ones, but many people don't have individuals around them to provide support. They don't have what's needed to survive on a day-to-day basis in order to be functioning – and as the Seniors' Advocate has said, not all seniors can afford the necessities of life. Well, at this stage in the game, Madam Speaker, it is important for us to remember that.

What is there for our seniors? Will the Poverty Reduction Plan be targeted for seniors? When will that be coming? How will that help our seniors in the 40 districts of this House as we move forward? And we do look forward to that.

I did have another message from an individual who watched a portion of the House yesterday, who made a comment with respect to housing, going back to the housing units that were similar many years ago, smaller bungalows, more affordable to own, to upkeep. Maybe that's something we need to look forward to. Of course, when government are going forward with their housing plan, we keep that in mind as well.

Speaker, one thing that I haven't spoken about and I want to do that today is persons with disabilities. We all know how difficult it is for anybody, seniors, middle-class, working-class people, who are trying to make ends meet. But if you have a person with a disability as well, what is the government's Poverty Reduction Plan going to do there? To my knowledge, I don't even think – I stand to be corrected – it was even

mentioned. I don't think it was mentioned in this plan.

Will the Poverty Reduction Plan be expanded to address the higher rates of poverty for many persons with disabilities, what they face on a regular basis? Will that include help to find affordable and accessible housing?

I'll be the first to admit it, I haven't spoken about it many times in this hon. House, but it's something that we need to do. Persons with disabilities do have the added disadvantage, unfortunately. We need to do what we can there. Of course, government's Poverty Reduction Plan should include persons with disabilities.

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

**J. WALL:** That's one thing that I'm sure we can all work towards for the 40 districts in this hon. House.

Madam Speaker, I'm trying to cover as many topics here in the amendment today, but what I'm hearing back from my constituents – this morning I spoke with several early childhood educators in my district and what they are facing on a daily basis. Of course, the early childhood educators, the amount of them, affects all residents of my district.

I've had cases where a mother who has been working at Eastern health in radiology had to quit her job because they didn't have space to put their children in daycare. With everything that's going on today in Health Services, she had to quit her job to stay home to look after her children because there was no availability.

I have spoken in this House over the last number of years that a lady from Torbay had to drive to Kilbride for child care every day. That added expense each day to try to have safe child care for her children in order for her to go to work.



The lack of educators in my district and others means a lack of spaces and a lack of availability, and this reality is very different. While the budget boasts \$10-a-day daycare, which we've all said \$10-a-day daycare is a good thing, it didn't chart the course to ensure people had that availability to access it. That's not there.

I am hearing about it regularly in my district, and when someone has to give up their job, we have a major issue. There is a long wait for access. There is no access in certain areas. This government has been celebrating; however, I feel that the lack of spaces has fallen down. It's falling down on the jobs to plan adequate and sufficient people to provide spaces that the children require.

This is not difficult. We have \$10-a-day daycare to make it more affordable; however, the spaces are not there for people to go to. In addition to that, Madam Speaker, we have retention issues. So I'll ask: Are the early childhood educator pay scales, benefits, bursaries and grants competitive enough? Are they good enough to ensure that we retain the child care professionals in our province?

I do know that they provide a crucial service, but according to the NL chapter of Child Care Now, the verdict on this government's actions on child care and early childhood learning have now come in from the profession and they're giving it a grade of F.

It's hard to believe, but this government got a grade of F on overall spending on child care in the budget, a grade of F on pension and benefits in early childhood educators and a grade of F on structural cuts to the College of the North Atlantic for early childhood education training. All of these decisions impact the many families in my district and, as I said, right across the province.

This government needs to admit that despite all that's been said in the Budget Speech, this year's budget misses the mark on early childhood education and child care. I'm hearing that from the early childhood educators in my district. As I said, I spoke to some this morning. I'm hoping to speak to others later today and tomorrow, because they provide a crucial service. Where would we be?

I know that when my children were young – they're 25 and 21 right now, but if it wasn't for daycare, for my wife and I, we'd have to do the same thing. Someone would have to stop work, and that is unacceptable.

That is one thing that we need to be mindful of with early childhood educators, and I'll give a shout-out to those in my district today. I have some awesome people who are early childhood educators. I meet with them, when I can and, of course, I see what they do on a daily basis, how they support the families that go out and go to work every day and I'd like to thank them personally, those in my district especially.

Madam Speaker, someone touched yesterday – I believe it was my colleague from Conception Bay South – on the increase of food bank usage. Unfortunately, I'm seeing that as well. The food bank in my district also serves the District of Conception Bay East - Bell Island and the increase in usage at that food bank is astounding, to the point where – I'll give a shout-out to the Torbay Folk Arts Choral Group, a wonderful group of singers and musicians that came together a couple of weeks back, had a fundraiser for the Northeast Avalon Food Bank and, with the support of St. Nicholas Anglican Church in Torbay, they put off a concert and raised over \$4,500 for the food bank.

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

**J. WALL:** Of course, I know personally, because I know some of the people who use that service at the food bank, it also

supports their children going to school. Having a child not having something to eat to go to school is clearly unacceptable.

I'll give a shout-out to that group, who do wonderful work throughout the district and, of course, this was a need that the food bank has seen. The food bank is struggling, no doubt, with the rising costs, of course, to pay bills and not everyone has the ability, Madam Speaker, as they did some years back, to be able to donate and provide to the food bank. I've said before that I've had volunteers who had to stop volunteering driving for food bank deliveries and what have you because of the price of gas. We're looking at mostly seniors on fixed incomes who are doing the volunteering.

All of this comes back, it's all related, Madam Speaker, because if the cost of living is so high, and everyone can't afford to do what they need to do, to help others, then others are impacted. So that's why the Folk Arts Choral Group took this on themselves and made that donation.

So, Madam Speaker, when we in the Official Opposition ask questions to the government on government spending – and I'll just use an example that's been discussed here on the travel nurses. I think we're up to \$80 million or \$100 million – almost \$100 million on travel nurses. Well, I look at that \$100 million and I say, where could it be used elsewhere? I discussed today, ambulatory services – \$100 million can go a long way to help the ambulatory services.

My colleague spoke earlier about MRI units and the need for more MRI units throughout the province. My colleague from Terra Nova mentioned about driver's medicals for seniors. All of this money that's being spent and we are asking questions on where it's going and how it's being spent. All this money can come back and look after so many other issues.

My colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port spoke about the paid work terms for students. Again, money that's being spent with respect to the travel nurses, some of this could be spent elsewhere. Some of this could be used to further government programs. It could be used, as I said, for any of these issues.

It could be used to support our fire departments. I spoke yesterday about the \$3.76 million that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety has to use on fire and emergency services. I'm sure he could have that line item quadrupled, no doubt, with respect to what's going across the province. I'm fully aware what the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board is under. I'm fully aware with respect to what she is responsible for in the province and all the budget line items in the budget that are there.

But when we look at what's not there, again, Madam Speaker, I'll go back to my question that I asked before: Will the budget meet the collective needs of the people of the province? That's what I look at. I listen to my constituents and I'll go back to that question when we're looking at the amount of money that's spent in – and I realize and I appreciate what goes into health care and education.

I can assure you, speaking with many of the teachers in my district, there needs to be more resources go into education with respect to the need for assistance in the classroom. I know that there are many needs and the stresses that are on our teachers today are becoming more and more heavy. I understand that. I appreciate the work that the teachers do.

Again, they need to be supported with respect to more resources in the classroom and that makes a difference to all the children that are there. We have children with special needs who are in the classroom who require assistance. I know, in my district, there are many classrooms with

three, four, five children with special needs with one teaching assistant. Madam Speaker, that's simply not good enough. It is simply not good enough when we have that few resources to support our teachers.

**J. DWYER:** It's too big of a ratio.

**J. WALL:** Yes, my colleague from Placentia West - Bellevue said it's too big of a ratio, and that's the best way to put it when you're looking at the needs for those with autism who are on the spectrum. And, of course, that not only goes into school, but I'll go back to early childhood education and spaces there for young boys and girls with autism.

I appreciate the time that I have to speak. I had a couple of more topics that my constituents asked me to touch base on. I'm sure I'll have a chance to speak again. I haven't had an opportunity with respect to paving in the district. Of course, everyone is taking a comment on paving today at the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure but I know he's always listening and we look forward to –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Relocate to Torbay.

**J. WALL:** Relocate to Torbay.

He's always listening. I look forward to that conversation. With respect to Transportation and Infrastructure, I'll give a shout-out to the Transportation and Infrastructure staff that are in my district for the work that they do –

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

**J. WALL:** – on a regular basis. At times, with the limited resources they have, the staff in my district do awesome work.

Madam Speaker, I'll end off as I always say, I appreciate your attention, I appreciate the attention of the Members opposite and I look forward to speaking again.

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

**SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh):** The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Speaker, and again it's always a pleasure to get up here and to represent the residents of the Exploits District, the people who put me here. It gives me the opportunity to be their voice in the House of Assembly and do what they want me to do. They've got some issues in the district and I don't mind bringing those issues into the House of Assembly for it to be heard and to see what kind of responses we can get for them.

I'll start, Speaker, with this being Volunteer Week, of course, I would like to touch on some of the volunteer efforts that have been going on in the district. Volunteerism, I think we would all agree, is the backbone of every district. It's what they do for our communities, what they do for individuals and it's amazing, on a day-to-day basis – especially our fire departments. A lot of us got the volunteer fire departments.

The volunteer fire departments we depend on them day in, day out and year in, year out for different aspects of what they do. They're known right now as first responders, not just firefighters. They're the first on the scene to everything right now from firefighting, road accidents, ambulance calls, that sort of thing. They're the first on the scene for everything. They're a very important part of our districts. We rely on them for Santa Claus parades. We rely on them for different aspects of the community.

All the supports that we can give to our volunteer fire departments right now, we should be giving to them. We should be putting more emphasis on those fire departments. I know in my district this year, right up till, say, November – I started last spring – I've had two or three fire departments tell me that they've had applications in for tanks, application in for suits, no reply – no reply to our volunteer firefighters.

I put in requests to see where it is. A full year gone by and no reply on suits and no reply on tanks. It's unacceptable to be treating our volunteer firefighters in that sort of way when we depend on them for every aspect of our day-to-day lives right now.

Last call I made I was told to tell them to put in a new application for next year. Kick the can down the road a little further for our volunteer fire departments. They're not looking for much. They're not looking for the world. They are the world to us because we depend on them and we rely on them.

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

**P. FORSEY:** But having trouble because they can't get their suits or their tanks or the fire equipment that they need, that's not good. It's really not. We certainly need to be putting in more supports, faster supports for those individuals that we rely on every day. We'd certainly like to see that done.

Other volunteer groups in the district, of course, I know the Lions Clubs were recognized here a couple of times today in Members' statements and so they should. I've been a part of the Lions Club for 25 years myself and I know what a Lions Club do –

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

**P. FORSEY:** – and I really believe – and our motto in the Lions Club is We Serve and I tell you, we do.

That brings me to something about the eyeglass collection. You wouldn't believe the eyeglass collection. This is done through the Lions Club. The eyeglass collection is done throughout the province in the boxes in different stores, different medical places, anywhere, you pick them up there. But those eyeglasses are then sent to the penitentiary in Bishop's Falls – there's a program there in Bishop's Falls.

Those eyeglasses are then broken down, refurbished. There's an inscription on the eyeglass. Those are refurbished and probably sent to places like The Gathering Place, Stella's Circle, where they're reused. All the plastics then are melted down for recycling in different areas. Then those eyeglasses are sent to different areas. Transport companies pick them up from there, bring them to, say, the Atlantic provinces, where they're redistributed on another transport company to other places across Canada like The Gathering Place or Stella's Circle.

Other parts of the eyeglass collection are given to missionary people that they're taking down to Guatemala for vision care down there. That's a very important – one piece of what the Lions Club does. Since its inception in 2018 in the eyeglass collection, there's been 450,000 pairs of eyeglasses gone outside of the province to different areas to help people – 450,000 pairs –

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

**P. FORSEY:** – to help people with vision.

When we say volunteer groups, volunteer groups are very, very important in the communities, very, very important to our province. The more we can probably do for volunteer groups is something that we could look at.

I know this year heat pumps were a big thing – changing from oil to heat pumps. But those volunteer groups, the buildings, the organizations, couldn't avail of the programs. I know the minister can tout about the changes that are being made. Listen, we have got to find solutions for climate change with regard to that kind of stuff. But when the programs are there and those people can't avail of the programs that are there to help them along to help other people, then we're losing sight of what really needs to be done, because when those type of people, the Lions Clubs, the fire departments, are trying to get help for

other people, then, as government, we certainly need to be supporting those organizations to do the job that they do at the end because we rely on them every day.

That was just Lions Clubs – and I don't like to name any because I'll miss a name and, of course, you know what happens then, I'm going to go home and they say, Plea, b'y, you didn't talk about us, and they'll be right. I apologize for that before I get there, but Kinsmen groups again, Knights of Columbus in our area – there are other different groups. Church organizations – I did a Member's statement on one of the church organizations here this week. In one year, they put out over 3,000 meals in one year.

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

**P. FORSEY:** That is throughout the community and the surrounding communities that are around. That's meals for seniors; that's meals for individuals who are on probably low incomes. There are different aspects of it, but they're fair to everyone.

So we need to find ways to be fair to them. In the support sectors that we have in our communities, we certainly have to find ways of being supportive of them. BGC: I can't talk enough about the BGC clubs, the Boys and Girls Clubs.

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

**P. FORSEY:** We've got them in Norris Arm, we got them in Botwood and we have them in Buchans, in the Central area. They're very important all across Newfoundland and Labrador.

But what they do to students, young students, children, as they progress to be productive members of society, it's amazing – It is amazing. The children are not out on the streets. They're not getting in trouble, probably. They're not finding ways to amuse themselves because the BGC clubs keep

them active, keep them respectable people in the communities. They support the communities. They do things in the community. So we should be certainly giving more supports to those groups, not taking fundings away which happened to the BGC groups.

They lost some of their fundings to the BGC groups, which if we're going to – we sit here and we talk about mental health issues in youth. BGC are a great group to be involved with, to keep everybody together, support themselves, help themselves, show themselves along the way of what they can be and what they can do for the communities and for our province, for themselves, not to be cutting programs so that they can't support each other. So that's the sort of things that we need to do.

With regard to the groups, like the Kinsmen Clubs, other clubs, the community supports, the medical transportation that they provide; I only talked about the eyeglasses from the Lions Clubs. The medical supports that those volunteer groups provide to individuals is amazing. It is amazing. Every day when medical transportation is not there to support the individuals, then those groups are there. I've seen them helping them with prostheses; helping people with wheelchairs; helping people with flights to get operations done; from a number of issues and things that those groups and organizations do.

So not only do they support individuals, they're supporting government because government doesn't have to pay for most of those trips when medical transportation is not there, those support systems are there through the community sector.

So maybe we should be putting a little bit more emphasis on the community sector and I don't think there is a lot in that budget for that. So that is where we need to be putting the emphasis on.

I'll mention the Lion Max Simms Memorial Camp, a big, big camp that is fully funded through all the Lions Clubs in Newfoundland and Labrador, the N3 and N4 organizations, fully funded. It costs about \$2 million a year to run that operation. The supports and the disabled people that use that in the run of a year, it's amazing. They come out every year. I know the CNIB come out. There are the disabled, other people, they come out and anybody disabled has the ability to use that camp. But they cannot avail of supports through government to help out with those programs.

It's amazing that those volunteer sectors are basically, sometimes, doing what government should do. They don't really need to be supporting what government does, but they do. So government certainly needs to give back to those organizations and groups so that they can do their jobs. Because without the community supports, those individuals, sometimes, especially in need of medical transportation, medical supports, they would be in dire straits if those organizations weren't there to help those in need. That's what they do, they help those in need.

Again, through community supports, through volunteers, we did projects, basically projects in the communities, not just the projects that are done through government supports, but through community supports like playgrounds; a lot of the community sector, a lot of the volunteers, put up playgrounds. I'll go back to the Lions Club again. I can remember about 10 years ago, 15 years ago, in the community of Bishop's Falls, we raised over \$300,000 to put in a playground through different groups, through different organizations – \$300,000 to put in a playground.

Another group, Lions Club again, I can remember back about 10 years ago, the Exploits Search and Rescue in Grand Falls-Windsor wanted a command centre; started off with probably \$150,000 that they

needed, but they needed an organization that could raise funds. They came to the Lions Club. So we took it on. The president, at the time, he's now in the House of Assembly, actually.

We took on that project and it started out with \$150,000. As the cost went up and went up, we purchased that command centre for \$350,000, one year later.

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

**P. FORSEY:** The Exploits Search and Rescue, that's another volunteer group that's amazing to individuals that need the help, especially on search and rescue, sometimes cold in the wintertime or lost and people need to go out. Those people get out of bed 4 o'clock in the morning, 3 o'clock in the morning, snowbound, everything, because if it's not bad weather, if it's not good conditions, then we don't need them anyway. That's unfortunate, but when there's bad weather, it seems like that's when it happens. I know it can happen any time, but those people are out on a volunteer basis to look for our loved ones, somebody else's loved ones that's had an accident and just needs to be brought back, supported and get the supports that they need, even medical assistance to be brought out.

That's another group that there's not much government funding put into. So when you look at the full aspect of our volunteer sectors in the communities – and I know I'm just talking about Central Newfoundland because I know Central Newfoundland, I know the area, but we've got them all over the place.

So the volunteer groups are very, very important to our communities and to our society. I think government certainly needs to put more emphasis into supports for our volunteer sector because, again, they are the backbone of any community and any community is proud to have those

volunteers. Those volunteers are proud to do it.

If you ask those volunteers from the fire departments, to the Lions Club, to the Kinsmen Club, to Knights of Columbus members, to different organizations, to church groups, you ask how much they get paid. Not one dime – not a cent.

What do they put in? Forty hours a week, 80 hours a week, 365 days a year. They're working 24-7 all the time.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Not one cent do they ask for, not a thing. We should recognize that and at least try to support their organizations.

What they get out of it, though, is what they feel inside. The reward they get is what they feel inside. That's their reward, what they get out of what they give. It's all in the giving, not the getting.

I got carried away on the volunteer groups because they're that important to our organizations and to our communities. As I went through and remembered and thought about what they do for our communities, it shows they are a very, very important part of our communities. I never even got to touch on some of the important things I wanted to talk about, I guess, but not more important than our volunteer groups, because there are certainly other things in the district that we could be talking about.

With that, Speaker, I would like to see more in the budgets this year, next year, down the road, more supports in programs. I think government would understand that and would recognize that as well. We need to support that volunteer sector so they can do the work that they do for individuals and do for government because the more they support those individuals, the more they're supporting government, especially in the medical transportation part.

When the medical transportation are not paying those people to get to their hospitals or get some work done, to get their flights paid for, to get their prosthesis like I mentioned, when government is not supporting individuals on that because they run over the caps and programs are not there, the individuals from the volunteer groups are there.

With that, Speaker, I'll take my seat and say thank you to all the volunteers throughout my district and throughout the province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's a great honour to stand again to speak in the House of Assembly. Today, I'm speaking in regard to the non-confidence amendment that was presented yesterday in the House, which, in essence, basically submits that the budget is missing the mark. It's missing the mark on many areas.

Yesterday, I spoke for my 20 minutes solely about the issue regarding seniors. That is one of the portfolios that I hold as shadow minister, is the portfolio of Seniors and Aging. I will have more to say about that as well. I feel that there needs to be more analysis done of the budget and I intend to do that going forward as we continue the debate over the next number of days.

However, I also had planned on speaking on some of the other portfolios that I am responsible for as shadow minister and that's Persons with Disabilities, that is Justice and Public Safety, as well as Women and Gender Equality. I was hoping to address some of those today, but I will digress because I feel it's necessary to

speaking about a very serious issue that is occurring in the District of Harbour Main.

I raised that issue earlier in a petition with respect to the condition of the roads, specifically on Route 60 with respect to the areas of Holyrood through to Upper Gullies and Seal Cove. The petition that I raised, Madam Speaker, identified the concerns of the people in those areas that I have been hearing from very clearly, loudly and clearly ever since the Roads Plan was announced. The Roads Plan has excluded and has ignored the roadways from Holyrood to Upper Gullies and Seal Cove. This is very important to address today.

I think there are a number of ways that I'd like to look at this to try to better understand why this area was omitted. When the minister responded to my petition today, he has indicated that there – of course, we understand there are many priorities that the department has to look at. When I examine how these decisions are made, Madam Speaker, I'm left without any clear understanding. I have theories as to how these decisions are made as to who gets pavement in what district in our province, but I'm going to put some ideas out there for consideration.

First of all, we've heard it raised recently about pork-barrel politics. What that, essentially, means, Madam Speaker, it refers to the granting of favours to individuals or to groups to win support and get votes during an election. That's the general principle or the general definition of pork-barrel politics. I wonder, I have constituents asking me how come we're not getting any pavement in this deplorable area in terms of the roads in this area. Is it because we are not a Liberal district?

I'm asked that question and I say we have done everything we're supposed to do, Madam Speaker. Since 2019, I've presented 14 petitions on the roads, begging for the government, for the ministers of Transportation, and there have

been four in that period of time that we have implored and appealed to, to look at, specifically, this road. It's just gotten worse and worse since 2019, obviously. Yet, it continues to be ignored.

We're at the point now, Madam Speaker, where the people are extremely frustrated. They are angry. They're very disappointed and they're at the point where they're insulted. We've had the minister – and I thank him for that. He came out at my request to meet with the council in Holyrood. This was the first meeting. Not the last meeting last week, which I was not privy to, but the meeting before I arranged and he came out. He drove over the roads – this was last year – and he could see the condition himself first-hand. We did that.

We have presented in the House of Assembly. I've raised it in Question Period as well, questioning him why this is not getting the attention that it needs. That these roads are deplorable, that they are perhaps even dangerous with the severe ruts that exist in the roads.

The people are at the point where they're, like, what can we do? We've done everything that we're supposed to in a democracy. The tools that we have to beg for some attention. My constituents ask: Are they listening? Are they truly listening to these concerns?

Madam Speaker, we've looked at municipalities, the municipalities have reached out, the towns of CBS, the councillors now they've gone public in CBS, some of the councillors, in terms of what is going on. Why is this area being neglected? Because it is such a very deplorable area in terms of the conditions. They can't understand why this isn't being done.

Madam Speaker, again, we're left with the question, is it because we're not a Liberal district? One has to wonder, when we heard the new Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island reference making a phone call



and getting things done for his district, is that how it works? That's the problem we have here. We don't know how it works. How is this measured? We know that the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue had a constituent from his district who reached out and she quite eloquently, in the media, questioned what the evaluation process is here in determining who gets the roads paved. It made the analogy, is it like a colouring contest? Is it a popularity contest? How is the measurement?

We know that they seek input from constituents – and we did that, too, Madam Speaker. Our constituents – I put it on Facebook: Everyone, this is important; reach out to the department. Let them know what areas that you feel are concerns. They did that from our area in Holyrood on Route 60.

So we did all of those things, but we're left to wonder if it has already been decided. Is it a fait accompli and this is futile exercise that we are engaging in just for the optics? That's what we're left questioning.

Then we also talk about pork-barrel politics and getting the politics out of paving. This is what's so frustrating about all of this. We really are left to wonder what more can we do. What more can we do? How is this decided?

I recall one of the ministers of Transportation in one of their statements, I believe it was the predecessor of the current one, say in some of his comments that they were looking at low-volume roads and how it was connected to tourism. Then we hear sometimes it's high-volume roads. What is the evaluation process in determining who are the lucky ones that get the roads paved?

Then we were told, apparently, from this constituent from the District of Placentia West - Bellevue, when she called in, because she wanted answers as to how does this work, she was told, apparently, by

one of the department officials in Transportation and Infrastructure, unofficial – and this was in the media, she made a phone call actually into *Open Line* – she was told the best thing to do is lobby your MHA and that the MHA is the one to put forward what communities are a priority within their district.

Is that what happens? Is that how it works? So not only do we have districts competing in this contest, one against the other, now we have communities and towns within a district, we're advocating for one over the other.

I would submit, it's a very arbitrary process that is very concerning because we do not know how this works. So much for the transparency piece, Madam Speaker. We're left in the dark. We're left to our own means of, okay, let's do our petitions, maybe that will work. Let's write letters to the minister, which we've done. I've encouraged my municipalities to do that. I've encouraged constituents to reach out to the minister. We do all of those things in the democracy, so what is it going to take? I'm really left without any understanding of how this works out and it has been five years.

We heard the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, earlier in debate today, referencing the Premier's district and the millions of funding and investment going into his district, which certainly –

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** It's \$30 million with respect to is it roadwork or investments going into his district? Where is the fairness in that?

We look at \$1.4 billion over five years. They forget over there that this is taxpayers' money, folks. This is not your money. This is the taxpayers of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** And it has to be fairly allocated amongst the 40 districts. This is not about partisan politics. This is about fairness. This is about transparency. This isn't about popularity contests or partisan politics. We have to get away from those old ways. We have to move beyond that if we're going to have the vision of an evolved society. We have to look towards that, Madam Speaker, because I fear when we see this, we are only further disillusioning our electorate.

But I don't think that's going to happen, Madam Speaker. The reason I say that is because when we look at what the voter turnout was in Fogo Island - Cape Freels, obviously the result we're pleased with, as Progressive Conservatives, and it was a win for our party. But, for me, it goes beyond that, Madam Speaker, because it shows you had 3,300 people get out and vote. That is democracy in action.

We're going to see more of that, Speaker, because when people see these things happening, they are getting frustrated and they're going to collectively start to speak out. We saw that in that election. Voter turnout typically is very low, so when we see the people rise up like that and vote, that's really encouraging. That gives me hope that things will change, Madam Speaker. It will change because when we see the increase and the fact that voter apathy – people are no longer apathetic. The concern is always, well, this is the way it's been done and it's going to continue to be like that.

Well, do you know what? The people of Fogo Island - Cape Freels said no, it's not. We're not going to stand for that anymore. We're going to speak out and maybe that's what it's going to take. It's going to take, not only elections, but it may take people, for example, in the area of Holyrood, in the area of Upper Gullies and Seal Cove, the people that are driving over that despicable road, that you call a road. It's not fit to be called a road. Maybe it's time for them to have collective action and to speak up and

to protest and to have peaceful demonstrations to show their opposition to what's happening because no one seems to be listening to them.

All of the things that we're doing to try to get the attention of this government, of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, is not working. So other than an election, which will be coming within, we know, the next year – change is in the air. If people don't want to wait until then, we may see more protests.

I have been asked by people in my district: What can we do? Can we get out and protest and collectively show our opposition and our frank disgust with what's happening here? I said, by all means you can. So maybe this is what we're going to have to do. We saw that it was effective when it came to the fishermen, more or less effective, it appears, with the harvesters. So, hopefully, people will start to stand up and not be complacent anymore. That's what needs to be done. We saw it in Fogo Island - Cape Freels. I think we're going to be seeing more of that as time goes on.

So, Speaker, my concern here is with respect to this problem. There's lack of transparency here by the department and how these important decisions are being made with the people's money. We're looking at \$1.4 billion over five years; yet our guess is as good as yours as to how those decisions are made. Is it low volume? Is it high volume? What are the priorities?

Is it because of the fact that we are not in a Liberal district? That I have been asked by my constituents who question that when we see, as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands referenced, the Premier's district getting \$30 million in his district. If that is the case, there's something radically wrong with this picture, Madam Speaker, and maybe it's time for the people to speak up.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

Speaker, in continuing with the debate on the budget, I want to talk a little bit about the key interest of mine, that I think is important to a just society and that's about adequate housing.

There are plenty examples of where having decent, full-funded, supportive housing can actually save money, if it's about money, fiscal responsibility, in policing and in health care. Again, I draw the example to the municipality of St. Thomas North of Hamilton that saw a decrease in its policing services as a result of the supportive housing that was put there. They had to reassign their resources.

Anyone who has visited larger cities well knows the level of homelessness, people sleeping in parks, sleeping in doorways, on the street and sidewalks and it's now come to our province. The people who are sleeping on the streets in St. John's are from across the province. In some cases, from across the country and it's in other jurisdictions.

Since 2019, when I was first elected, finding suitable housing, as I said before, for constituents has been a struggle. It's always been a struggle, but I will say this, we always managed to find a place for people to live with the help of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and CSSD, but it's gotten worse. The number of people chronically homeless and those using emergency shelters has increased. It's becoming increasingly difficult for us to even find a place for people to live and, often, they're calling on us at the last minute, we're getting evicted, this week, and there's nothing we can do.

I think that's the most difficult part for me and for my constituency assistant, because you get into this job with the intention of being able to help people. Even before I was elected, housing was always an issue. As I've said before, I was with a volunteer group and we would deliver hampers to people's homes. You would get an opportunity to see the conditions in which they were living which, in some cases, were deplorable, and that's probably the thing that spurred me on.

I remember one house in my district in one of the houses that we served, I think there were upwards of 14 people or so living in the bed-sitting room or some form of that house. It was a family home turned into that, and I always remember that was going to be the housing unit, when we got into our own housing project, that we were planning to buy.

I always remembered in the downstairs section of that house, one bathroom in the basement area and there must be about four or five rooms there or more, and there was one gentleman there who was between 65 and 70. He had a door that he could lock. He had a hotplate on which he could cook. I don't know if he was permitted, but he shared the room with a number of other people there of various ages, a lot of young people.

I remember him talking to me about how unsafe he felt and I often thought, you know, I was much younger then, and I'm thinking in terms of when people talk about the golden years of their lives in retirement of sitting back and being able to enjoy the fruits of their labour. He had worked and this is where he found himself. This was it for him.

I think of anything else, that's one of the things that, with my involvement in that organization, we said we got to find a way to at least address the housing issues that are in the area in which we serve. I still had no intention or no plans of being in politics.

I remember in 2019, I think, early on, visiting another house in my district in the area of Patrick Street. There were four people there were never going to complain because they didn't have anywhere else to go, but what I remember most about that house was the deplorable state. You could literally put your arm, if you wanted to, from the outside into the inside room.

I remember meeting with – and I forget who the minister of CSSD was at that time, but I spoke about how often do you inspect these places, because there was good government money going into house the people and I would say it was not a safe place in which to live.

In the summer of 2022, I found myself, for the first time, helping people who had chosen to sleep in Pippy Park. Some of them couldn't get into a shelter because they had a dog. Some of the SPCA societies and that had helped them actually pay for the campsite so they could keep their animal with them. For people, I would say, who are experience trauma, homelessness, having an animal, that warm body, it's significant. It's not a luxury.

I think after that, we were contacting earlier this year CSSD and NLHC to see if they would pay for the camping fees of people who had nowhere else to live. We've called the emergency shelter line a number of times, only to be told that they were at capacity. I remember one conversation, so you're telling me that this person really has no choice but to sleep on the street? No, that's not what I'm saying. But that's exactly what it meant.

You wonder why I'm so upset at the shortage of housing. Now, I would've been content in some small measure if we could've had no one sleeping outside in this winter past, but that didn't happen. I do believe, Speaker, that we deserve better from our government. I remain unconvinced that we're getting what we deserve from this

government, especially when it comes to some of our most vulnerable populations.

Now, *Budget 2024* acknowledges the importance of stable, safe and affordable housing to a person's well-being and boasts of record investment in housing. Remember, this is the same government that said, well, we had 750 units constructed, but only 11, really. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure promised at the time back in December that no one would be sleeping outside in tents by Christmas, but the number of people sleeping in tents at the Colonial Building has only increased – 25 by the most recent count.

We did an ATIPP, or there was an ATIPP done here with regard to the Tent City. It's interesting what this ATIPP shows. This is the number of visits by the outreach team to tents. Back in January 2023, one visit. Nothing in February, March, April 2023. In May 2023 there was one. Then in June, one; July, six visits; August, it jumped to 17 visits; September 2023 up to 16; October, 30; November was 14 visits. I guess the point here is that long before the homelessness crisis came to the very steps of the Confederation Building there was a growing problem to which this government, the department, CSSD and Housing seemed oblivious to. That's the problem. This could have been headed off, but what brought attention to it, let's call a spade a spade here, is it ended up on Prince Philip Parkway.

As I said, the homelessness crisis came to the steps of the Confederation Building when those with no place to live set up a tent on Prince Philip Drive, within sight of the Premier's office. I actually just have to say it was an embarrassing symbol of government's failure to address the housing crisis facing our province. Even the Premier, I would have to argue, was too embarrassed to walk across the Parkway and speak to the people who were forced to live there.

Now we had five-point housing plan, on the first day that the House of Assembly opened at that time. He spoke of affordable housing and housing that is affordable, I would assume a distinction without a difference. I would have to say, those initiatives and the poverty reduction strategy were more about distraction than actually taking any concrete action and anything to take the focus off Tent City across from his office.

Out of desperation then, at the end of November, you guessed it, the Premier announced a homelessness task force to address the Tent City problem and homelessness across the province and appointed the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, instead of the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development to head it up. Almost five months later, Tent City at Colonial Building has grown. It's still there. But it is off Confederation Hill and out of mind, sort of, and out of sight.

Now, it's interesting, according to this ATIPP back in December, an email was sent to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure about three trailer units outside the Waterford Hospital property that were owned by Transportation and Infrastructure and could be recommissioned to provide shelter. There were at least two washrooms, one of which was equipped with a shower. The trailer units were used as TI support facilities during the construction of the Pleasant View Towers. They're equipped with heat pumps for heating and air conditioning with the backup electric heaters during extreme cold temperatures. As far as we know, it was looked into, but there was no further follow up.

Now, there's a good chance that maybe they're beyond repair, beyond usefulness. They've been vacant too long or unused for too long. But isn't that typical? Because we've had housing units here – the Member for Labrador West has talked about units that have been left vacant for years and, in my own district, that probably require a

significant amount of investment in renovations and the only thing you can do is tear them down.

I think of the Grace General Hospital, which is now demolished. I remember in 2019, again, I approached several ministers: Why not use the Grace General Hospital site or the nurses' residence for housing, for affordable housing, maybe low-barrier shelters, maybe so many of the floors could be rented out to not for profits and community groups to help sustain it and have it run by a board of directors made up of not for profits that are already involved with housing, the Salvation Army, End Homelessness, you name it?

I guess what was said at that time to me that was really bothersome in some ways – the comment was made by the minister at the time – if we had done that 10 years ago, it would have been feasible, but, right now, the only thing left to do is to tear it down. At that time, it was \$2 million, the number I was quoted. It costed us \$3 million to level it. I'll get into some solutions in a minute as to what we can do with that property.

I often thought with regard to the Waterford Hospital, the trailers, there was an opportunity here, at least, to set up something like they've done with the Erb's Road shelter in the Waterloo region and other parts of the country where they actually have these heated shelters and secure shelters so that people do not have to live in tents. There is an opportunity here, at least in the interim, until we can get the other measures up and running so people didn't have to live where they're living right now.

They're not just down there. There are people throughout that I visited in other parts of the city. And do you know what? There are people throughout the province. So it's not just a St. John's issue, but I would say a lot of our urban areas, and in others, they're dealing with this.

Now, the government entered into a three-year, \$21-million lease with the Comfort Inn and established 140 transitional housing facilities. On the one hand, I would say this is a positive thing, at least in the interim because, if I understand it correctly, there will be 24-7 supports. I'm not sure. I still need some answers to that as well and if it will involve, also, peer supports and so on and so forth, like they have at Indwell, at Carruthers house and even down at the Ches Penney Centre of Hope.

The trouble is that even when it was in the news the other day: When will it be ready? Well, as soon as possible. So, think about this, I don't know what as soon as possible means, but I would like to have a time when it will be ready. And, yes, government can say, well, if we do that, you'll only say we didn't live up to the promise. Well, do you know what? Set the deadline. I can tell you, if you haven't met the deadline, of course I'm going to criticize government for it.

But I do have confidence, I think, in an organization like End Homelessness and other not for profits to run it. That's where my confidence lies. Regardless of their deficits or the drawbacks of any of these measures, I do believe that none of it would have happened were it not for the attention that we brought to it, ourselves, that Members of the Opposition brought to it, that advocates in the community brought to it and that the media attention that was brought to it. I really believe that we wouldn't have even the shelter right now or the other measures if, indeed, public scrutiny hadn't been brought to bear, and that's a problem.

Now what does the motivation matter? Well, it matters if, indeed, you had to be shamed into acting. I guess, here, the motivation does matter, whether it is rooted in a belief that housing is a basic, fundamental human right and that's what I do believe, passionately. I have heard it on this side as well. Or if it is simply about mitigating public

criticism, what guarantee do we have that the commitment is sustainable?

Now, we have a stand-alone Department of Housing and appointed another, I guess, junior Member to run it and tragically – and this is the problem that really rankles – the minister still has not – not that I know of, anyway – received the mandate letter, nor is the minister willing to affirm that housing is that fundamental human right.

*Budget 2024* moved Newfoundland and Labrador Housing into core government service, presumably to provide the newly minted minister with an office and a department staff. But I ask this question: How can a minister who can't bring himself to formally declare that housing is a fundamental human right effectively run a Department of Housing?

Imagine wedding vows, instead of answering: I do. It's: Well, you know, I believe in this. I love you. You can see, I gave you – I think I might. I don't think that's the start of a good relationship.

We have plenty of ATIPPs here, too. The amount of money that has been spent on emergency shelters, and I'll just give two here: In 2022-2023, from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, just for two landlords in the metro area, they received a total of \$172,052.

The same two – just two – received a total of \$719,000, almost \$800,000, and that's not including the other people. So we spent an awful lot of money, I think, on shelters and substandard conditions, when really we could have been investing in something much more suitable.

My time is running out and I'll probably get up and talk a little bit more about this, and the next time I speak, I'll talk about some solutions. I will say this, the Grace General Hospital is finally demolished, and I've advocated for non-market, community-based housing for this site.

There is an opportunity here to use the property now as a land trust or a land-lease community to set up acquisition funds so that groups like the Co-operative Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador can actually create some affordable, supportive housing. That would be a significant step forward, Speaker, and there are plenty of other solutions there.

I would say that the failure to develop a cohesive, well-thought-out plan is blatant in the housing crisis facing our province and government has failed to address this and it's having an impact on the people of this province. If we believe the CMHC report, then the next six years, in addition to what we already need to come up with, 60,000 new homes over the next six years and we still haven't addressed a crisis that is upon us now.

In Labrador West, the lack of affordable housing is a deterrent to people who want to move there and it's having a direct impact on the labour market. Torngat, again, the exorbitant price of a building lot for construction is exasperating an already dire housing situation.

Speaker, rather than have you cut me off, I'm going to stop here, and I'll carry on the next time.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

Is there a —?

**SPEAKER:** They'll fix it.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay.

Here we go, we'll start into the hour in a second.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Oh, I have a story to tell. Don't worry. Some of you won't like it, but I'm going to tell it anyway.

I want to start off, though, by again acknowledging the District of Stephenville - Port au Port that I represent and what an honour it is to be able to stand in the House of Assembly and represent (inaudible) —

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Of course, there was a lot of talk today, a lot of questions around transportation, a lot of petitions around road paving and a lot of petitions around road repairs. Certainly, my district is no exception. The minister is aware of them, but there is one thing that needs to be a game changer, because it's been referred to as a game changer by a lot of people, a potential for wind energy in this province.

We have a significant project that has been given a green light by the Department of Environment to move to the next phase of that. The company itself has said they're not going to be responsible for any of the roadwork or any of the damages to roads, but the roads that are currently existing around the Port au Port Peninsula, through the community of Port au Port West, are significantly in disrepair. They need a lot of major upgrades. They need resurfacing and, in some cases, widening.

So, at some point, I would like to hear what the plan is for roadwork on the Port au Port Peninsula, as we get ready for what potentially could be a significant amount of activity in that particular area. While I recognize that the company has plans to import a lot of things through barges, a lot of equipment through barges, there will still have to be a significant amount of heavy traffic through the Port au Port Peninsula as this project gets under way. So I would like to see a plan that outlines how this is going to be addressed.

The other thing that happened in our district a couple of weeks ago, because of a major rainfall, we had significant damages, especially in the community of Cape St. George but also in other communities around the district. While the culverts have been replaced – and I think you all saw the pictures on social media of culverts just floating down through the roads and across the roads and, in one case, a homeowner had their home destroyed.

So now the process is it's fine, after all the excitement of seeing all the damage being caused, it now comes back to, how do we fix it? The roads have been repaired in terms of the culverts being replaced, so the roads are now passable, but that's only one small piece of this. The next challenge is for all those homeowners – and when you think about the Port au Port Peninsula, there are a lot of people on the Port au Port Peninsula who are retired, who are earning Seniors' Benefits.

They're very proud of the communities they live in and they're very proud of their properties. If you've ever driven around the Port au Port Peninsula, you will notice a lot of properties that have been well maintained and the upkeep has been there. That just didn't happen overnight. That took years and years and years of investment and work to get it to that stage. And, all of a sudden, it gets completely wiped out within a 24- to 48-hour period.

What they're asking for is help. They're looking to the government to help them. Now, what that help looks like, whether or not it involves the federal government, whether it meets the criteria for federal government involvement, I'm not sure. I know the department has been working on that, in both municipal affairs and Transportation. But we need to get an update on those things. We need to find out exactly what's going to happen. Because people are looking at tens of thousands of dollars in damages.

While some of them, the policy in your own home insurance may be a policy that allows for ground water, and maybe you don't have that coverage in your policy. So let's not use those type of things, because you don't have this coverage you're not entitled to any help from your government. We can't be allowing things like that to get in the way of what makes sense to do and when people need help. That's what I'm asking for. I'm asking for consideration to be given that we actually go out and start to look at some of the damages.

I know there are other parts of the province – I saw the pictures of the unfortunate incident where the car got actually washed into the river. I mean, serious, serious issue, serious – and nobody got hurt. But I'm sure there are other places as well on the West Coast that saw significant damages.

Again, can we not find a way to help people? Because obviously, as I keep saying this House of Assembly, that's what we're here to do. We're here to find ways to help people. So I want to say, again, I would hope that through whether it's municipal affairs or it's Transportation and Infrastructure that we find a way, talk with the local communities, talk with the mayors and let's get some movement for the people that live in those areas.

Today, I want to follow up a little bit more on a conversation that started yesterday. It's all about who, what, when, where and why and who did what to health care and who did it and when they did it and who was responsible for cutting. Well, I go back to 2016-2017. It is a time when the government changed and the Liberal government came to power. Well, they didn't come to power to improve health care or to increase the budget in health care, they came to power with the intent of cutting the health care budget.

But not just the health care budget – not just the health care budget – not just the health care budget –



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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** – \$250 million in cuts, that's what it was. That was what it was.

Let's keep going.

Where did we make these cuts? Advanced Education and Skills, they cut \$50.6 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, how much did they cut, \$11.8 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Children, Youth and Family Services, CYFS, \$10.8 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** It goes on and it keeps going.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's good.

Education and Early Childhood Development, \$32.6 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Environment and Conservation total, \$3.5 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Fisheries and Aquaculture totals, \$1.5 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Forestry and Agriculture, \$6.6 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The Department of Finance, \$32.1 million.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** Terrible.

**B. PETTEN:** There got to be more.

**T. WAKEHAM:** More?

**L. DEMPSTER:** (Inaudible) want *Hansard* to show that (inaudible).

**SPEAKER:** Do you have a point of order or anything?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker, for the protection.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I want to keep going.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Now I'm at Health and Community Services, \$54.7 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** There was \$54.7 million cut. Justice and Public Safety, \$6.3 million.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Transportation and Works, as it was called at the time, \$9.8 million there.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Now, let me go to one line – I love it – in the Transportation and Works budget. One line, here it comes: Elimination of 24-hour snow clearing –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – despite someone’s claim that we never had 24-hour snow clearing.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Their own budget document said they were eliminating it – eliminating the 24 hours.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member is just right there and I find it hard to hear him.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

If the Members want to talk across, please take the conversation outside. I can’t hear the Member speak.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** I still got 50 minutes to go.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Eliminating the 24-hour snow clearing, \$1.9 million.

I’m going to get a little more serious here on that one because when you look at it, we’ve been told that they never had 24-hour snow clearing; their own budget said they did.

What’s really concerning to me is when I think about all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially rural Newfoundland and Labrador, who have to travel on our highways beyond the current

hours of operation of our snow clearing crews. To say that we put their lives at risk for the sake of saving \$1.9 million, that is something that is despicable.

In rural Newfoundland, we don’t have our airports in every town, some of us have to drive considerable distance; a lot of people have to travel. So, at the end of the day, we’re turning around and saying that we’re going to save \$1.9 million, but that’s okay if the road isn’t plowed and you got to get to a hospital. That’s okay if the road isn’t plowed and you need to go to the airport.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** They all want to speak, Mr. Speaker, they all want to speak.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I know it’s been a long week for everyone, the tension is getting high. I ask Members to keep the conversation down so I can hear the speaker.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** I’m glad to see that the Members opposite are so upset with the cuts they made.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** They should be.

Now, Speaker, let me focus in on health care because we’ve been hearing stories about health care and who did what to whom. Well, we just know that there was over \$15 million taken out of health care in that 2016-2017 budget. And let me tell you as someone who was there, we were told it was not our job to question these cuts, as CEOs, that was not our job. Our job was simply to implement. Our job was to bring forward recommendations and the government, the Liberal government, would

decide what they were going to implement and when they were going to do it.

If you don't take my word for it, read the words of the former minister of Health, Mr. John Haggie, who went on to say: "Haggie said regional health authorities submitted proposals on where the cuts could be made. 'Some of them were approved and some were not.'"

And guess what one was approved for Labrador, from this Minister of Health. That's what happened.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** And not only –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker, for the protection.

If the Member opposite would like the briefing note presented to her that shows exactly how the decision got made, I'm more than happy to do it – more than happy to do it.

But one of the sad things about it, when we were making those cuts – when we were told we had no choice, when we were told we had to cut our budgets by up to 30 per cent –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm asking both sides of the House to, please, respect the Chair and let me allow –

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

**SPEAKER:** I said both sides of the House. You don't need to look at me like that.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

One of the sad things about these decisions, when these calls came to the regional health authorities telling us that we had to cut up to 30 per cent of our budget, we were told you're not allowed to go and talk to the communities. You are not allowed to go and talk to the communities, that is what we were told. You are not allowed to tell people what you're planning on making changes to. We weren't allowed to do that.

The hon. Member opposite is so upset because she was an MHA at the time in the district and she was not allowed to be told by our own government. Her own minister didn't tell her.

We were told not to tell the MHAs that were in our own regions – not to tell them. Go ask them, that's how this (inaudible). So, at the end of the day, facts matter, and we have lots of facts and we have lots of information.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

If Members continue to shout back and forth, you will lose your speaking privilege the next day we sit. You won't lose it today because we are running out of time, but the next day we sit, you'll lose. That's enough shouting back and forth. If you want a conversation, take them outside, please.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

Let's keep it going: \$50 million cut out of the health care budget, and what did it look like? Well, in Eastern Health, the headline

says cutting jobs, and the headline said Central Health closing clinics. So there was lots of action taken by all of the health authorities across the province trying to come up with these draconian cuts.

The government was told that there was no way that we could cut 30 per cent out of budgets without having an impact on services. If the Members opposite don't realize, and I'm sure some of them do, I'm sure the Minister of Health realizes, that almost 80 per cent of the cost of health care in a health authority is a salary-related item.

You cannot turn around and have that kind of measures introduced without actually turning around and impacting service delivery and impacting staff, and that's exactly what happened. It wasn't just staff in Labrador-Grenfell Health or Eastern Health or Central Health, it was also Western Health.

The article says, "That will mean eliminating 12.8 full time equivalent positions, mostly nurses who work in the operating and recovery rooms" in Western Health. Now, that's how this was done. This wasn't done just in one health authority; this action was taken in every single health authority in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

That was cuts, but that wasn't the end of it. That was 2016-2017. That wasn't the end. Then it started again. All of these options are put forward, and Minister Haggie's own words and briefing notes prepared, they took all these measures and they decided which ones were going to be implemented. That's exactly what happened. It happened in Western Health. It happened in Central Health. It happened in Labrador-Grenfell Health and it happened in Eastern Health – same process every single time. The buck stops with the minister of Health of the day and that's where the decision was made to exactly say what was actually going to be cut. That's how the health system started to deteriorate under this Liberal government.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** But there was a bigger plan. The Liberal government had a bigger plan. They just didn't want to cut \$50 million out of the health care system. They wanted to cut \$200 million out of the health care plan. And if you don't believe me, go look at the five-year fiscal forecast for that period. When it's written right into the five-year fiscal forecast that they were looking at cutting up to \$200 million out of the health care budget, and the current Minister of Transportation would certainly know what I'm talking about because he was the deputy minister at the time.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What?

**T. WAKEHAM:** He was the deputy minister at the time and there were schedules done up about how this was actually going to be achieved – line by line, going through every item and what they were going to do to eliminate \$200 million from their health care budget. So \$50 million the first year, up to another \$200 million.

Here's what that deputy minister of the day had to say about health care in this province. He described the system in the coming years – and I'm quoting – that will likely include fewer nurses and doctors.

Can you imagine that today? This was what they were projecting to do. This was what their projections were for a five-year fiscal forecast: fewer nurses, fewer doctors. Here we are now –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They accomplished that.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Here we are now – exactly – seven years later, struggling to keep our emergency rooms open, struggling to staff our acute-care beds, struggling to open our long-term care beds. That's the result of the fact that the plan was not to increase health care; the plan was to cut health care. That's exactly what they did.

As a matter of fact, one of the measures that was being proposed in that \$200 million was to reduce the cost of nursing service by \$21 million – actually reducing nursing services by \$21 million. One can see why that would happen when again the former deputy minister is quoted as saying: We don't have as productive of a nursing workforce as we should. That was the attitude of health care: We don't have as productive of a nursing workforce as we should. That is exactly what they said.

And again –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** It goes on, Speaker, it goes on. The same former deputy minister again said: It's possible – these are his words, not mine – to shave several hundred million dollars from the health budget. Now that was their plan. That was the plan, 2017. Here we are, seven years later, and we have what? Emergency room departments not open. We have nursing shortages all over the place.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** People waiting on MRIs.

**T. WAKEHAM:** People waiting on MRIs.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A crisis, a crisis.

**T. WAKEHAM:** A crisis, a crisis, a crisis.

Well, that is exactly where and what this government did to health care. That's exactly what the plan was for health care, and we wonder why we talk about a health care crisis. We were talking about we didn't need any more nurses. As a matter of fact, we needed less. That's what they were talking about. They needed less, fewer nurses. Their vision of health care in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador was not to expand nursing services; it was to reduce it. Their plan for health care in

Newfoundland and Labrador was not to have more physicians; it was to have less. That's right here. That's in the fiscal forecast, a \$200-million reduction in health care. That was what the plan was and, as a result of that, they didn't listen.

Because they had this plan, they were not prepared to listen to the Nurses' Union who said: We need staffing reviews. Our nurses are overworked. They're being called back on double time. We need a review of our acuity levels, not just in long-term care, but acute care. We need a review of the staffing models. We need to look at do we have enough nurses in our units? Do we have enough LPNs? What should the skill mix be? Those were demands being made back in 2015, 2016, but they were never listened to.

The NLMA did a similar thing. They asked for the same thing. They wanted to know what was going to happen in the future, what was the plan. But we all know now what the plan was. The plan was to cut \$200 million from the health care budget. That's what was in the fiscal forecast.

It wasn't about increasing. It wasn't about listening. It was about simply cutting. That's exactly what their plan was, and have we seen the impact of that? Sure, we have. Did COVID make it worse? Sure, it did. But that's exactly what happens when you have no plan.

Don't forget it wasn't that long ago that we had asked where is the human resource plan for medical professionals? Where is the human resource plan for health professionals? We were told that there was a plan, but it wasn't until there was an ATIPP request made that we found out that indeed there was no plan – there was no plan.

Then we waited a full year, it was almost a full year before the actual RFP finally went to the streets to try and develop a human resource health professional plan, which

we're still waiting on, I think. I have not seen any sign of a human resource health professional plan to this day. We are still waiting for that.

So when you think about the challenges we currently face in our health care system, one ought to think back to pre-COVID and maybe if we had to listen to the nurses and the staff working in our facilities and listen to their concerns about their workloads and about their family lives, maybe we wouldn't have lost as many people when COVID hit. If we had to pay attention and listen to the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association and to NAPE and to CUPE, their workers, the LPNs and the PCAs who mostly staff our long-term care facilities.

I was glad to hear the minister say that their decision that was being made to eliminate LPN programs was reversed. That was great news to hear, that decision had been made to reverse that. Because we need to get every single LPN and PCA that we can working so that we can open those remaining long-term care beds that are still closed. That's what we have to be focused on.

We have to be focused on retaining all of the nurses that we currently have in our colleges and in our system. That's why I continue to ask if all of those nursing students, if those nursing students have been offered full-time jobs. Because they should be offered a full-time job on their way in their programs, not on their way out.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** We will continue to suggest that because that is what needs to happen. Those are the things that need to be happening right now.

I recently spoke to a bunch of students enrolled in a nurse practitioner program and I asked them if they'd been offered a job, a full-time job. I was surprised to hear the answer was no. We have to get past this.

We have to make sure that whoever is out there doing the recruitment and retention for our own health care workers, they have to do a better job. Because there are a lot of people that are not getting those offers, that are not being talked to. We need to make sure that we're doing a better job of communicating with all these people.

I asked the minister yesterday about the nursing students from Labrador. Again, I was glad to hear that they are being flown down to do their practicals and they are being put up. That's good to hear that's happening. Now they all need to be offered full-time jobs.

We have a situation always in Labrador where we could use more nurses. We should be offering them full-time jobs right now. Let's not wait until they graduate. Let's be proactive. Let's start getting that work done now. That's where we ought to be going. But, again, those are things that we ought to be doing now, that's being proactive.

This fiscal forecast, hopefully, is gone out the window, but it's a history of why we wound up in the place we're in, because it had to do with where their train of thought was on where health care should go. When you do that, you bury your head in the sand, when you don't listen to the people that are working in the system, when you don't listen to the Nurses' Union or to NAPE or CUPE who are telling you that we need help.

Let me tell you, there are a lot of things that can be done in our health care system, right now, that do not involve more money, that do not involve spending more money. If you want to go and talk to some of the people that are working front line in our facilities and ask them what they would do differently, you will get a lot of answers, you will get a lot of suggestions on how we can actually do things more efficiently and that isn't always about money.

We talked today a little bit about the drivers' examinations for seniors over 75 years of age, a simple thing. We know that everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador does not have access to a primary care physician. As a matter of fact, while they'll argue about numbers, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association keep talking about 100,000, 120,000, 150,000 people without.

Now think about that senior, 75 years old, who has their independence because they can still drive their vehicle. They want to continue to drive their vehicle. Well, at the end of the day, they need a medical. They need a medical examination. They shouldn't have to go to an emergency department to get a medical examination done.

The government introduced a policy that says the medicals will be free. They won't have to pay for them, the doctors will be reimbursed through MCP. Great. Good for you. Glad to see it, but, at the same time, they didn't do anything for those seniors who don't have that access.

We have nurse practitioners in our province who have stepped up to help out with people who don't have a primary care physician. They do a great service and provide great work. Everyone that I've ever talked –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – and everyone that goes to see a nurse practitioner, right now, are satisfied that they have a primary care provider, someone that they can actually go and see in person. We still haven't figured out a way to reimburse those nurse practitioners. We haven't figure out a way to reimburse the patients. Now, the added bonus is, if you go to get your medical done, which you need to have your driver's licence, we can't figure out a way to pay or reimburse them for that service.

We shouldn't be talking about this. I've been talking about this for two years now. We

should be talking about: How do we maximize the value of our nurse practitioners? Absolutely, many of them will be part of collaborative health teams and they want to be. Many of them want to work in intensive care units or in other critical areas, or cardiac care or program areas, but others would like to work in emergency departments. How can we make that happen? Others want to work and set up their own clinics. How do we make that happen? Those are all things that we ought to be doing to find creative solutions to make that happen.

We're spending an awful lot of money and we're making announcement after announcement, but are real things getting fixed? That's the challenge. We have groups out there who are prepared to step up, who have talked about stepping up, who want to step up, but we haven't figured out a way to do it.

I think that's a shame. It really needs to be addressed and I think there are lots of opportunity to do that and we ought to be doing it now. We shouldn't be sitting here still talking about it and, again, I don't see anything in the budget that's going to allow that to happen. I've heard no conversations about that taking place. I would love to see that conversation take place and those things happen, but again, as I just said, I'm not sure that is there.

One of the other great initiatives of the initial 2016-2017 budget had to do with fee changes. Over 300 fees were increased – over 300 fees were increased. Some fees went from \$0 to \$50. So we're collecting monies on over 300 fees. I think I've spoken to the minister about this before and asked how much money are we actually making. Because at the end of the day we charge all these fees – and this, by the way, was meant to add another \$19 million to the coffers of government.

So we took another \$19 million out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians by increasing and implementing new fees worth over \$19 million. Nineteen million came out of the pockets and continues to come out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

All of these continue to flow. And that's the point I'm making: They continue to flow. As a result of that, it wasn't just – the levy we lost. Thank God the levy is gone. We know that at one point we were paying a levy to live here, but that's been eliminated. That's good – that's good. But all of the other fees that are listed in this document, how many of them are still in place? How many of these fees are still in place? And how much money are we actually making on these fees? How much is it costing government to collect \$19 million in fees? They don't know. We don't know. We know we charge them. And that's why I've said that every single fee and tax needs to be reviewed to make sure that they're still appropriate and to make sure that they're still (inaudible).

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** We know some of these have been reduced since, which is good. Some of them I'm sure have been reduced, but that was another major hit. But how many of them, we don't know. Others have potentially gone up. So, again, this is what we're talking about.

And the other part of this is when we sit here and talk about the budget and talk about where we've gone and whether we're balanced or not, our deficit has doubled in the last 10 years.

**S. COADY:** Debt.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Our debt. Thank you, Minister. Our debt has doubled. Our total debt has doubled from approximately \$15 billion to \$30 billion, and the minister will surely speak to that, I'm sure, and tell me how much of that is contributed to energy

projects and anything else and everything else.

**S. COADY:** Your projects.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Oh, we know what ours were; we were up to \$15 billion when you took power. Is that correct? Is it now \$30 billion?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** Am I wrong that your fiscal forecast is now over \$30 billion?

**SPEAKER:** Address the Chair.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker, for the protection.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I think, Speaker, that there are lots of opportunities here. This is what we've been talking about. It's about choices you make. We're spending enough money. We're clearly spending enough money, but it is about the choices you make.

And the Member here for Topsail - Paradise yesterday talked about education and listed all the reports that have been done on education, and they didn't come cheap. They had a cost, every one of them. Legitimate question: How many of the recommendations have ever been implemented? It seems like the only recommendation that gets implemented is a recommendation to do another report or to create another task force or to create another all-party Committee.

It just continues to pile on one report after another and those recommendations, I mean, we could go through the Moya Greene report, the McKinsey report and then we have the secret reports, the reports that we're not allowed to look at.



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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Oh, yeah.

We all remember the Rothschild, almost \$5 million, but shush, you're not allowed to see that one. No one is allowed to see that one. Why? Why are we not allowed to see the Rothschild report? Maybe tomorrow or next Monday or Tuesday in Question Period, I'll ask the minister about how much money we spent this past year on the Rothschild. Maybe she will be prepared to answer that for me. Just to let you know.

**B. PETTEN:** What about the LEAP report? Remember LEAP.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Oh LEAP, oh my God, yes.

That is the problem. We're here talking about this and we're bantering back and forth, but at the end of the day, it comes down to choices. Like when you commission a report, the people of the province expect action on the report. They don't expect it to just simply sit there.

I know that there has been reports done in the past. There have been reports done – lots. I mean, there are a roomful of reports around the Confederation Building, but I thought we were past that. I thought we are at a stage where if we're going to do a report, why don't we turn around and at least implement the recommendations of the report or indeed follow them.

Are we following the recommendations of the LeBlanc report when it comes to how we do major projects now, or are we simply bypassing all of those things? We have serious issues in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador right now. We have serious issues with access to health care. We have serious issues with affordability and the cost of living. We have serious issues with people on fixed incomes who are being continuously left behind and who are finding it harder and harder to

make ends meet. These are serious, serious issues.

We have an education system in crisis. Imagine, who would have ever thought that a school in Newfoundland and Labrador would be closed, not because of a teacher's workshop, not because of a storm day, but because there were no teachers. That has happened this past year in Newfoundland and Labrador.

How many retired teachers are being asked to go back to work? How many retired health care workers are now back working full-time? Is that what we're talking about? Is that our solutions to our current problems in education, to rely on retired teachers, to rely on retired health care workers? I don't think that's a solution that we should be depending upon.

It's great that all of these people have stepped up to help out the province of ours when we need them. I'm glad to see them step up and come back and help out.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's not what we should be having. We should be in our schools and in our programs talking to every single student currently enrolled in the education faculty at Memorial University and say: Have we got a job for you. To every single student who is currently enrolled in the college or our university that is in a health program, that we have a need, a desperate need for in this province, have we got a job for you.

So let's not, as I said earlier, wait until they get out. Let's get to them on the way in and let's continue to do that. That's exactly what we're going to do in a year from now.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Because that's what you need, you need to be planning. You need to plan and you need to keep listening to the people, not on the opposite side over here,

but the people that are out there in the system working. People working in the system, those are the ones that have the suggestions, those are the ones that have the solutions.

That's why it is so important, when we talk about our budgets, we talk about the opportunities, because it's not just about today, it's about the opportunities. It's not about recruiting the person for today's job. It's about recruiting the person for the job four years' from now. That's what we ought to be talking about. That's where our fiscal planning needs to be taking place.

Oh, sorry, Speaker, I got to start over –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – the minister just came in.

Once upon a time – I won't go back but I'll gladly give you a Coles Notes version of it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** *Hansard* got it all.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Yeah.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Phone me tomorrow night.

**T. WAKEHAM:** We'll gladly go back. We'll be talking.

In all seriousness, I truly believe that if we don't start to think about how we're going to staff up, it's not about – as I said, we have serious issues today, but what are we planning on doing? The plan simply to go to Dubai or go over here or go over here, that's short term. What I'm talking about is maximizing out all of the people that we have.

We've heard the Nurses' Union talk about the need for retention. We've heard the Nurses' Union talk about that. That's a serious issue and we need to be listening. We need to be listening to them when they

talk about how to recruit and how do we keep our own staff here.

If we don't retain the young people that we currently have in our province, then we don't have a province. So we better start taking it seriously. That also starts with taking the fact that our students are finding themselves in a lot of fiscal challenges when it comes to cost of living themselves.

I mean, whoever thought that we would hear of a food bank at university and a food bank running out of food. They're facing significant challenges. Tuition fees have gone up. The cost of rentals have gone up, the cost of accommodations.

If you're travelling from rural Newfoundland and Labrador to come to college here in the city or university, you'll face significant expenses. Unfortunately, some of the people are choosing not to come and that is unfortunate. So we've got to find a way to be able to help that, to fix that, to make it more affordable.

We have seniors – and we've talked about them a lot – on fixed incomes that are having a hard time making ends meet. I believe there are creative solutions that can be accomplished by reviewing how we tax our senior citizens. There are opportunities to make changes to them, to put more money back into people's pockets.

Ultimately, we heard the minister talk about immigration. It is critical to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to have an immigration strategy, but as I said before, an immigration strategy can't simply be based on a dictator invading a country. War is not a recruitment strategy or an immigration strategy, but we need a good one.

I applaud the efforts, but I think it has to keep going. We have to welcome people from all over the world, because, if you think about it, that's exactly what we are.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Except for our Indigenous population who have been here since time, we are all immigrants. We all came from some other country or our grandparents came here, our great-grandparents came here and we were welcomed here. We came here and we settled in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are all very proud to be here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think there are another half a million of us that are travelling all over the world, that if they really had the opportunity to come home and work, they would all be back here. We know that because you are always here, you know you're here and you want to come back here. I don't want us to simply be a province where people come from. I want us to be a province where people come to.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That takes a lot of effort, so we really need to focus in on that. Part of that effort starts with a great education system; an education system that welcomes students from other countries; an education system that is seen as one of the top education places in the world. We have facilities like our Marine Institute, a top-notch world facility. We ought to be making sure that everyone in the world knows exactly how great it is. Those are things that we ought to be highlighting and ought to be focusing on. Those are real opportunities that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I truly believe that. I think that immigration is part of our strategy, it will have to be, and retention. As I have said, retention of the people that work here.

When you think about the fact that there are almost 20,000 people who actually commute to work, and when I say commute to work, I don't mean around our province, I mean to other parts of our country or offshore, who leave their families for periods of weeks at a time and come home. How easy would it be for them to resettle where they work? They could probably all resettle

where they work and have a lot more time off, a lot more flexibility and, perhaps, a lot less expense, but they chose to stay here. They choose to stay here. That's exactly what we need. All that money, as my colleague just said, all that tax revenue, all that expenditure comes back to Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's why, in the last couple of weeks, when we saw all those harvesters demonstrating on the steps of the Confederation Building, it was so disappointing, because as one business owner in Fogo Island - Cape Freels District, a small convenience store operator when I stopped in to see him, the crab fishery hadn't started and he said to me: Today, 5,000 lunch boxes didn't get filled. That puts it in perspective of the impact. It's not just the big things. Think about the fact that all these plant workers didn't go to a convenience store, didn't go somewhere to buy those little knick-knacks to put as part of their lunch box for that particular day.

That's the impact of our fishery. That's the importance of our fishery all over Newfoundland and Labrador. And people think about it as just a benefit to rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, we know the significant impact that our fishery has on our capital city and on other major centres across Newfoundland and Labrador.

All you have to do is when the fishery is in full swing and booming, so are our communities. You could see the hustle of people's feet, the increase in their steps, the busyness of the restaurants, the stores are filled. There are people out shopping, kicking tires on vehicles, maybe trying to upgrade. Those are the important things. Over a billion-dollar industry with over 16,000 people impacted by it. Those are all such important things.

Of course, our tourism industry, again, a billion-dollar industry with over 20,000 people employed. I know we're working hard on that, and we need to continue to

work hard on that. How do we increase that to make it longer term, to make it more of a longer season? There's lots of good work being done. But that's another renewable megaproject, just like the fishery. It brings in new money every single year, just like our fishery. We have to invest in it, and I will always support that. Just as I stand here and support our fishery and always will stand – which was the backbone. It brought my ancestors to Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm sure the fishery brought many more people's ancestors to Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will never lose sight of what we have here that comes naturally. We have a fishing industry. As a matter of fact, when we talked earlier about Newfoundland joining Confederation 75 years ago, when Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada 75 years ago I think Canada – and I would stand to be corrected of the exact place, but Canada was ranked something like 24th in the world in terms of fishery resources. When Newfoundland and Labrador actually joined Canada, the country went to like ninth in the world. That's how valuable our fishing resource is to the country of Canada and to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Are there lots of problems with how it's been managed over the years? And we keep asking, and we will continue to ask that we need to have a bigger say in how this fishery is run. It's not good enough that some bureaucrat in Ottawa can say to a fisherman on the wharf in Musgrave Harbour to cut the end off your boat because it's too long, you can't go out. They dictate the size of your boat. They tell you what type of gear you can use. They tell you what your quotas are. We need to have a bigger say in that. That's why I keep talking about an accord. If we can have an accord for our oil off our shore, surely we can have accord for our fishery.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** These are not big asks; these are just things. If we're going to be part of Canada, we want to be treated as an equal partner in Canada. That's what we're asking for.

Lots of times the federal government will announce all of these projects that are coming and the money for this and the money for that. When you dig deep enough, we're almost made to feel like they've given us something extra.

They've given us nothing extra. We're a part of the federation of Canada and, as a province of Canada, we are entitled to our fair share of those federal dollars for those programs. What we ought to have is recognition of the significant contribution that this province has made to Canada.

We have gone and pulled above our weight, as they say; we've contributed more than we've taken. We certainly have turned this country a lot greener because of the energy projects that we've undertaken.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And we get no recognition.

This major energy project that, yes, it went over budget, but at the same time, it's helping Nova Scotia get off coal. We got no recognition by the federal government of the carbon reduction that particular project did. We got no recognition for that. What did we get instead? We got a carbon tax.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A Liberal carbon tax.

**T. WAKEHAM:** A Liberal carbon tax.

So these are the things that we got to be fighting for, these are the things we're going to continue to fight for. I can tell you that on this side of the House we will continue to stand and fight for every Newfoundlander and Labradorian and fight to make sure that they have a place where life is affordable, that they live in a province where life is

affordable, where health care is accessible and where no opportunities are left untapped.

If there are things to be developed, then let's develop them, but let's make sure that if we're going to develop our resources in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, then we are the principal beneficiary of those resources.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And let us make sure that we have those community benefits agreements so that everybody can benefit all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and we can all prosper. Because that's exactly what we want. That's exactly what we need to be doing. That's exactly what should happen.

Nobody – nobody – in Newfoundland and Labrador should be left behind. Those of us here in the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, we plan on doing that.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Before we put forward the motion, I just want to remind Members of the Government Services Committee, that Estimates tonight at 6 will be Labrador Affairs; tomorrow morning at 9, the Social Services Committee will be Health and Community Services; and 1 tomorrow afternoon, Digital Government and Service NL with the Government Services Committee.

All those in favour of the motion to adjourn?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until next Tuesday.

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