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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

Admit strangers and start the broadcast.

A few things before we start today.

First of all, we're making history, I think, today in terms of we have a visitor on the floor of the House, baby Alexander.

Welcome, baby!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also, before we get into the Members' statements, a point of order and a point of privilege that I want to comment on.

First of all, I would like to rule on the point of order raised in the House on October 7, 2020. The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi raised a point of order under Standing Order 44. The Standing Order requires Members to address themselves to the Speaker and not to each other.

In reviewing *Hansard*, I did find that there is a point of order in the manner in which the minister responded. I ask the minister and all Members of the House to refrain from personal addresses and instead to address their comments to the Chair in the course of debate.

Thank you.

I would also like to comment now on the matter raised by the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair on October 8, 2020. Parliamentary privilege enables Members to fulfill the parliamentary functions for which they were elected and it enables Parliaments to function.

Privilege is the freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation and molestation in the carrying out of a Member's legislative duties.

In raising her point of privilege, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women articulated very well that language used in debate matters. The Member for Conception Bay South responded to the point of privilege that was raised based on his remarks. He withdrew his

remarks and stated that he apologized, unequivocally. Therefore, a prima facie matter of privilege has not been established; however, I see no reason why principles of respect and civility should not apply to debate within this Chamber.

I draw Members' attention to the fact that language and tone used in debate is a choice and they do matter. Members of the House are bound by a Code of Conduct and we have all sworn an oath or affirmed that we will govern ourselves in accordance with it.

Further, the House recently adopted a Harassment-Free Workplace Policy governing our interactions outside this Chamber.

The Privileges and Elections Committee spoke to gender-based issues in both the interim and the final report. Gender-based matters were a predominant theme as identified in the reports, and the Committee heard from a number of outside organizations on these matters including Equal Voice, the Women's Policy Office, the Human Rights Commission, the Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women and Egale Canada.

The final policy recommended by the Committee and adopted by the House integrated a number of gender-based considerations further to advice provided by these groups. In the report accompanying the policy the Committee stated as follows: "The House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to a safe and respectful work environment for Members and employees that is free from harassment, bullying and violence. It is everyone's responsibility to foster a healthy work environment; to promote a culture of civility; to demonstrate respect; and to recognize every person's right to be protected and supported."

The policy adopted by the House of Assembly indicates that it is the responsibility of all Members to: Act respectfully in dealings with all Members of the House of Assembly and employees; respect the diversity brought to the workplace by others; and challenge inappropriate behaviour/objectionable conduct when it happens and refuse to participate in that behaviour.

Further, the policy now requires all Members to complete respectful workplace training. It is mandatory here in the House.

I want to remind all Members that each and every one of us has completed that training since February 2019.

I reiterate that, while the policy does not apply to our interactions within this Chamber given parliamentary privilege and the related freedoms of speech that Members enjoy, I see no reason why the principles accepted by the House and adopted in policy should not apply to debate here as well.

I ask all hon. Members to examine the language they use in the House and to ensure that it is temperate, appropriate and respectful.

Thank you.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have Members' statements from Members for the Districts of Harbour Main, Windsor Lake, St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise and Placentia West - Bellevue.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I speak in this hon. House to recognize the dedication, hard work and sacrifice by residents, employees and management of personal care homes and community care homes since the beginning of the world health pandemic.

Within the Harbour Main district there are seven care homes: Admirals' Coast, Hazelwood Community Care Home, Tobin's Guest Home, Butter Pot Hi-Haven, Woodford's Comfort Care Home, Eason's Personal Care Home and Callingwood Downs.

Mr. Speaker, the endurance shown in these difficult times by our seniors and others with special needs is truly inspiring. Our most vulnerable were isolated from family and friends for months and still are restricted to a limited

number of visitors and yet they adapt with grace and serenity. As well, the compassion and hard work of staff and administrators in skillfully adapting and keeping our senior's safe and secure in the face of such hardships is a remarkable feat indeed.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me in congratulating the extraordinary people who live in these homes and the staff and administrators of Newfoundland and Labrador care homes for their perseverance, leadership and ultimate triumph over adversity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I would acknowledge Emma Reelis, who received the Seniors of Distinction Award.

Emma has spent years respectfully advocating and providing social and cultural support for both individuals and communities.

Emma has worked with various women's groups, youth groups and other deserving members of the community. Emma is an elder and residential school survivor; and when I spoke with her this morning she remembered my involvement in the legal action for collective healing and reconciliation.

Emma has been a board member of First Light, the St. John's friendship centre among whose many services for clients is jobs placement. Emma embodies the definition of an elder. She is wise, respectful to all and has a passion for sharing her traditions and knowledge to keep her culture alive for coming generations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Emma Reelis on receiving the 2020 Newfoundland and Labrador's Seniors of Distinction Award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Wangari Maathai said: “Until you dig a hole, you plant a tree, you water it and make it survive, you haven’t done a thing. You are just talking.”

As an environmental activist and founder of the Green Belt Movement, Wangari Maathai knew a thing or two about planting trees. The same can be said about Chris Shortall and the Tessier Park Neighbourhood Association.

On September 26, I joined about 40 volunteers to plant about 175 fruit trees and shrubs at Tessier Park, a small green space in St. John’s Centre. With funding from Tree Canada, and support from the City of St. John’s, the Botanical Gardens and Sobeys on Merrymeeting Road, Chris’s goal was to establish a fruit tree forest in the heart of the city. I believe he accomplished that.

We spent hours digging, planting, watering and talking. That’s what made the day a success. People of all ages who love and are committed to the future of their neighbourhood came together to plant trees. After all, we do not plant trees for ourselves but for future generations.

I ask Members to join me in recognizing the Tessier Park Neighbourhood Association for making our world just a little bit greener.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour for me to congratulate Judy Sparkes of Paradise Centennial Lions Club, Lion of the year 2019-2020, in recognition of her outstanding service and loyalty within the community.

After retiring from a 35-year career with Canadian Forces in 2016, Judy returned to her hometown of Paradise and dedicated her free time to helping those in need wherever they may be.

She is a dedicated Lion and involved in many club projects and continues to give back to her community. Judy will be found at the community cleanups, fundraisers, food drives, Santa Claus parade, The Gathering Place and Ronald McDonald House just to name a few.

Judy, a charter member, holds the position of secretary where she received the Best Secretary Award for District N4 for 2018-2019, which was chosen out of 51 clubs. She is also chairperson for New Voices for women, a program developed by Lions International to celebrate women’s contributions to Lionism.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Judy Sparkes for her dedication, commitment and loyalty to her community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I bring honour today to a very honourable man in my district, the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue, Fire Chief Alex Coady of the Marystown Volunteer Fire Department, as he hangs up his bunker suit for the last time and is retiring after 35 years of remarkable dedication and service.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night past, the brigade held an award ceremony that I was very honoured to attend and present the years of service awards. During the ceremony, the firefighters showed their respects to Chief Coady and honoured him for his legacy, not only locally but provincially as well, acknowledging his training and mentorship to many. Chief Coady in his retirement is joining a very prestigious honour roll of lifetime members.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in giving Chief Coady their sign of gratitude for 35 years of selfless commitment to his community, region and province.

Thank you, Chief, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today is the kickoff to Innovation Week, hosted by the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Technology and Innovation, which includes workshops, seminars and networking events focused on promoting our technology sector and showcasing inspiring, good-news stories.

I'd like to continue that theme today and note that our tech sector is already estimated at a value of \$1.6 billion in Newfoundland and Labrador, with approximately 165 companies and 4,000 employees; and demand is expected to exceed 2,000 new tech jobs over the next three years.

Our tech sector is driving growth across all sectors and diversifying our economy. Today at the kickoff, the Premier highlighted three innovation projects for which we are investing a total of \$1.7 million.

Mitacs is supporting business innovation and technology commercialization throughout the province while training the next generation of graduate students in advanced and applied research and development.

The Iron Ore Company of Canada is undertaking a research and development project that is looking to solve one of the largest technical challenges for the iron ore industry in the Labrador Trough region – the recovery of fine iron.

Resource Innovations Inc., based in Corner Brook, is purchasing updated mapping software to support its geographic information systems. This is essential as this industry is witnessing a major shift to digital data management and remote data collection and processing.

Mr. Speaker, countries and provinces with robust innovation and research and development

activity see improvements in productivity, economic growth and job creation, and have more resources available to support spending in education, health, infrastructure and other areas.

I'd like to congratulate NATI, which is also now known as techNL, and all of the organizers of Innovation Week. I look forward to participating in a panel discussion with them tomorrow and highlighting the fantastic work of our tech sector.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I take this opportunity to recognize this week as Innovation Week. While Innovation Week draws our attention to the technology and innovation sector, the Industry Association, NATI, works tirelessly throughout the year to support growth, champion new innovation and promote expansion within the industry. The innovation technology sector is a bright spot within our province and a sector which we can all be inspired by, as it will help us withstand the economic consequences of this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, through new products, new technologies and new research, this industry can help our province achieve greatness.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I wish all those participating in Innovation Week a great and productive summit. I'm also glad to see the Premier and minister have listened to my request of investing in mining technology and improving the industry with Made Right Here solutions, along with investments in research in other industries. I hope the minister continues to be receptive to the insights of those living and working in the province's mining regions.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I recognize the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which took place Saturday, October 17.

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was first observed in 1993. It is a day to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. Acting together to achieve social and environmental justice for all is this year's theme.

Our government recognizes that these are challenging times for individuals and families. Poverty is complex and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Our focus is to empower people across their lifespan to prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty.

Programs supported through *Budget 2020* focused on poverty reduction include assistance for expectant mothers, ensuring that school-aged children receive nutritious meals, providing affordable housing and preventing homelessness, new resources for the K to 12 education system, supports such as \$25 a day child care and benefits for low-income seniors, individuals, families and persons with disabilities.

Through my Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, we are leading the development of a renewed 10-year poverty

reduction strategy in consultation with other government departments and agencies, as well as leaders, stakeholders and community experts, including people with lived experiences.

In fact, I recently met with representatives from the Coalition for a Just Recovery NL. This group consists of a growing number of agencies from across the province outlining a vision for an inclusive, empowering and just recovery for Newfoundland and Labrador. It is groups like this that will be engaged as work begins on a renewed strategy.

As a government, we will continue to explore, develop and implement new options and approaches that best meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I join the minister in recognizing Saturday, October 17, 2020, as United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year marks the 33rd anniversary since the first commemoration of the event, which occurred in Paris, France, October 17, 1987.

This year's theme asks us to act together to achieve environmental and social justice for all. Our PC Opposition believes that in order to overcome these challenging times we must stick together and get down to work on solutions that will appeal to everybody facing poverty right here in our own province.

A 10-year poverty reduction strategy is just the beginning. There must be more done in order to ensure all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a healthy, active and poverty-free lifestyle. While working together with the people of the province, stakeholders and agencies, we will reach our end goal ending all poverty here in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and join him in recognizing the UN's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. In 1989, the Parliament of Canada unanimously adopted a resolution to eradicate child poverty by 2000 but we still have a ways to go.

I applaud the efforts of government to reduce poverty, but I also strongly encourage the provincial government, in this unprecedented time, that it follow the recommendations of End Homelessness St. John's and the Government of Canada to exempt CERB benefits from income support payments. That would go far in eradicating poverty here.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, federal Cabinet representative O'Regan says the Liberal government will not make an equity investment in West White Rose.

Has the minister spoken with Husky officials since O'Regan's announcement, and what hope can he offer jobless workers that West White Rose will not be mothballed?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we continue to chat with Husky. Like any operator, we're trying to figure out solutions to the huge problems that face this industry worldwide. What I can say is, in fact, there's another call, I believe, lined up tomorrow afternoon.

At this point, we've been focusing on what this provincial government is able to do as it relates to this issue. We've spoken to them about trying to be creative. As we know, the previous request was not something this province could accommodate.

We're also looking at, with our new task force, ways to spend the \$320-million investment that's been made. We're still having good conversations and we look to continue those conversations into the near future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I'm glad to hear the minister mention the \$320 million because the flare boom, helideck and living quarters for West White Rose are about 80 per cent complete at Marystown.

Will the provincial government use some of the federal support money to incentivize Husky to bring back jobs for workers at Marystown?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, we look on this side, as we all do together, to try to figure out solutions to the problems that face the workers in this industry. I spoke to a number of them over the weekend, just talking about the challenges they face.

What I will say is that we just recently announced a 21-member task force that is made up of industry experts, academia and labour. We've asked them to come together and they've agreed to do so on behalf of this entire industry. They've met already; they met last week. They have multiple meetings scheduled this week.

They will help us determine how best to spend the \$320 million as we move forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister for that answer; however, the workers I've spoken to believe the government is approaching the whole question of dispersing that money with far too little urgency.

Does the minister think jobless Husky workers should wait until after Christmas to know whether they'll be asked to go back to work?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I would invite anybody to feel free to reach out. I've tried my best to respond to everybody that has and the conversations I've had so far – basically, these people realize that, as a provincial government, there's not much we can do as it relates to a global pandemic and an oil industry that worldwide is being ravaged right now. They realize, and, in fact, what I've gotten so far is an appreciation that we are trying to do our best.

What I can continue to say to them is that we are going to try to do our best. We have the best and the brightest minds in the industry that are on that task force. We have people made up from labour, people made up from academia, just people from all over who have agreed to come together to try to help out this industry. We're so lucky and appreciative to have them. Hopefully, with the help of this, everybody pulling together, we can help get some solutions.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, we're all cheered to know that the government is doing its best, but we're also mystified as to why it would take until next winter to decide on disbursement of the money.

Does the minister agree that the money provided by the Trudeau government for offshore support amounts to hush money, which is too little to get most laid off workers' jobs back?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I'll just say, Mr. Speaker, to that comment about hush money, that's just absolutely ridiculous. What I can say is that I'm working, along with the task force; we all have a vested interest in making this work. Everybody that is on that task force feels the same as us that we're going to try to do our best to come together in many ways to deal with a situation that is beyond us and that is worldwide.

The fact is that we are able to make solutions very quickly and as fast as we can come up with them. We all know that there is no home run to this. In fact, when it comes to the province, we'll try to pull the levers at our disposal when we can, as we did with an exploration incentive – that's just one of them.

As this expert committee comes together and provides input and solutions, we will do our best to put them to use as soon as possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I've noticed the minister has a habit of referring to completely legitimate questions asked on behalf of the interests of jobless workers as absolutely ridiculous. I might remind him of the remarks that you, Sir, the Speaker, made just a few minutes ago about respect for decorum in the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: When Minister O'Regan announced the federal funding for the offshore, he said he wanted it used for workers.

Why should jobless workers have to wait until next winter to see how the money is going to be used for their benefit?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say to the Member that when you refer to taxpayers' money as hush money, I still believe that is ridiculous, and if you're going to make assertions like that, I will continue to apply that terminology to them.

Now, going back to the second part of your question, which is certainly a legitimate question, no one is saying that these workers have to wait until next winter. If we can have solutions presented to us, we will put them in place as soon as we can. But we must realize that this is not a Newfoundland and Labrador issue only. This is an issue that affects every single oil and gas jurisdiction in this world.

We will do our best and we want to see these people back to work as soon as possible as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Hush money is money which is inadequate to the need and intended mainly to keep people quiet. Many think that the Trudeau Liberal government is dominated by people who want oil and gas jobs to wither and die.

Is this why the Premier has been unable to get meaningful leverage with his Liberal friends in Ottawa to save oil and gas jobs?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that we were just given, by the federal government, \$320 million to put towards this very beleaguered industry right now. So what I'm going to do, as a member of this provincial government, is continue to work with the experts in this field to deal with the situation as we find it; one that I would suggest is found all over this world.

One thing I will remind the Member, if we want to talk about federal politics, it is the deputy leader of the Conservative Party who when they mentioned energy-producing jurisdictions in this country, named every single province except one: Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: Last week, the media reported that there are now three companies interested in purchasing the Come By Chance oil refinery.

Can the minister provide an update on the refinery situation and has he met with all three companies?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I can confirm to this House is I certainly haven't heard that number. I know that I can go by what I've said. What I've said is that we obviously have one company that is known, that is Origin. Yes, we continue to work with them and work as much as we can, given the fact that it's two private industries.

What I've also said is that there is other interest that is out there. They've expressed it; they've said that they want to continue to work with us. As a provincial government and as a department, we've been working with anybody that is willing to express interest here because we want to get a solution to this problem.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: Workers at the refinery are worried about their future, while consumers are worried about the supply of petroleum products in the province.

When will the province know the fate of the Come By Chance Refinery?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While I can say that we share the fears that people feel right now – it certainly is a fearful time when it comes to this refinery – I cannot supply any answer because the provincial government does not have any decision-making authority when it comes to a private transaction. For me to put a date out there, I think would be disingenuous and I don't think would be fair.

What I can say is we fully realize the importance. We're consuming huge amounts of time and energy to try to help any interested parties, as well as the current owner, to come to a solution so that we can get this refinery back up and running.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: The owners of the Come By Chance oil refinery have reportedly asked the provincial government to provide financial support to keep the oil refinery on hot standby.

Will the government provide this support in order to keep the possibility of the sale of the refinery alive along with the hope for jobs for the workers in the area?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I've said this in the House before, while I would love to disclose all of the details that I may or may not be privy to, the realization is that this is a private transaction between parties and it would be inappropriate and perhaps we would be under certain liability if I were to disclose any information.

What I can say is that when it comes to these negotiations and discussions, we've been doing what we can. We've said that we are willing to consider any option, but right now I think our primary focus is on finding a willing and able buyer to come in and be able to complete this transaction, and that's where our focus has been.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Serious Incident Response Team, SIRT, was created to provide independent oversight of policing in this province. Last week an incident occurred in Happy Valley-Goose Bay between an officer and an Inuk man.

Has this been referred to SIRT for review?

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

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

At this point in time, it hasn't. I'm not sure if it's fits in the mandate of SIRT. I know the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay issued a release – I think it was yesterday, I became aware of it – with regard to they are reaching out for a third party investigator. At this point in time, I'm not sure what or who that third party investigator would be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This incident highlights the lack of support and services for homeless people in the community.

When is this government going to take real action to get homeless people off the street and into appropriate housing? Homelessness is tied to poverty, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the hon. Member raises a very good question.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation provides the Nunatsiavut Government with an annual grant of over \$500,000 to support operations of the Housing Hub shelter, which includes a housing support worker position. This is in addition to a water investment of over \$3.6 million annually to the Nunatsiavut Government to provide supportive housing arrangements, primarily in the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, we have learned recently that the federal government has refused to make much-needed appoints to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador to fill a number of vacancies which presently exist. These vacancies seriously contribute to backlog and delay in our court systems.

What immediate steps is the minister taking to encourage his federal counterparts to deal swiftly with this matter?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, just last week I had the opportunity to meet with Chief Justice Fry and Chief Justice Whalen and discuss the important issues of, not only the Court of Appeal, but the Supreme Court as well. There are a lot of important issues that we are dealing with at the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal.

Back in February 2019, we actually submitted our nominees for the JAC. Again in early 2020, the former minister actually wrote the federal government encouraging them to move this along. Unfortunately, very shortly thereafter we ended up in a worldwide pandemic and many matters have been slowed.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people at the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal for being able to adapt to the situation we find ourselves in and move forward and make the adjustments necessary. We are in the process of actually being able to have our jury trials here in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, this is a lengthy process which will take months, as the committee has to receive orientation, review numerous applications and forward the list of the recommended candidates to Ottawa. It will be well into 2021 before any appointments are made.

How is this situation acceptable to the provincial Minister of Justice whose responsibility it is to ensure access to justice in our province is not further delayed and denied?

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

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

The hon. Member is aware of the three pillars in our system: the Legislature, the executive and the judiciary, and the reality is we do not push into the judiciary. That's one of the parts of its independence. We do encourage, and we have encouraged Ottawa. I have a call later this week with my colleague, the federal minister of Justice, and this is certainly one of the things that we will be discussing.

I can assure the Member opposite that coming out of a situation as we are now with COVID-19, or still in COVID-19, our judiciary is working quite well. We've been able to have jury trials. We're actually using the School for the Deaf as a venue to make it work. I can tell you from the conversations that I had with both chief justices just late last week, they have many things on their agenda, but this is not one that is really, at this point in time, inhibiting our justice system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that the minister understands his responsibility in this area. Judicial vacancies are causing serious delays. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Is the minister concerned that these vacancies have caused the inquiry into Innu children in care to be delayed?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That is absolutely incorrect. The delays in the Innu inquiry have more to do with finding a mechanism or a manner to actually work within the terms of reference to get that inquiry up. We're doing quite well.

I know I speak regularly to the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs about this. We are having regular dialogue with the Innu,

with suggestions of how we actually move this inquiry forward, but I can assure her that there is not justice delayed here, Mr. Speaker. The reality is we're in a worldwide pandemic. There are no issues right now that we're not working through when it comes to the situation that we find ourselves in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, rotational workers who are heading home to self-isolate are not permitted to remain in their cars while travelling on the ferry to Bell Island. These workers are ordered to leave their vehicle and go to a common area where other ferry passengers, including cancer and dialysis patients, are.

I ask the minister: How is this safe?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question. It's a great question. It's a great question that's of concern to my district as well.

The former minister, I guess, would know that the governance of our ferries, the same as our airlines, is done by Transport Canada. We've been instructed, about two weeks ago, that everyone be out of their cars. They're enclosed deck ferries. It's a concern, like I said, for everyone involved. It's a Transport Canada ruling that asks people, not only asks people, orders people to get out of their cars. If they don't get out of their car, it's a \$14,000 fine per person.

My understanding is that the ferries have put in allocating the lounge area for anybody who would identify themselves as travelling from outside the Atlantic bubble area so they could self-isolate in an area on the vessel. Right now it is a concern, Mr. Speaker, but it is a concern we're taking very seriously.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Forty-five per cent of the lounges now have been closed for social distancing and eliminating certain spots or used for crew purposes, other than the general public. So the ability for people to isolate themselves is non-existent.

Mr. Speaker, this situation is not unique to Bell Island. In fact, it's happening in other provincial ferry services such as Fogo and St. Brendan's.

Why are Transport Canada rules superseding Public Health orders, particularly when we had just won our battle with the travel ban to show that the Public Health order is more important about public safety than it would be about Transport Canada or other divisions ensuring that people do not have safe ability to travel in this province?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would, just for the benefit of the House, inform them that the Canadian Civil Liberties Association has actually filed notice of appeal for the travel ban; not that that will actually, for the short term, produce any change until that case is heard. We welcome the view of the judiciary about the constitutional elements of this, which are of importance to a lot of people.

In terms of the issue about who has greater jurisdiction. It is clear from our discussions that Transport Canada has the mandate and the responsibility to deem what are safe practices on ferries and in aircraft. That is federal jurisdiction; it is not provincial. We have no way of influencing that, other than simply by lobbying and persuasion. They have the ultimate decision, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, last week, during a photo op at the Corner Brook hospital, the Premier stated that 85 per cent of the work is being done by locals, which is unacceptable. Previously, the minister stated that 95 per cent of the work is being done by locals.

Mr. Speaker, who's correct?

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

MR. BRAGG: I guess we're talking about averages, Mr. Speaker, so the information I had previously would have been dated in August. The Premier's would have been sometime after that.

The accurate information given to me today – so this is today's date – is there are 240 workers on that site; 24 are from outside the province, that includes management level and everything. So that's 90 per cent, the math on that for me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: I'm sad to hear the minister saying we're getting worse not better at this.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear stories of workers from Quebec arriving weekly at the site to do drywall and insulation work; work that can be done by Newfoundlanders; thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorian sit home unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit here today that the new mental health facility will be built 100 per cent by Newfoundland and Labrador tradespeople?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAGG: While the construction of that site, Mr. Speaker, is ongoing and the workforce

is in place, I'll be happy to report that on, I think it was, Tuesday of last week, we did an announcement, a sod-turning event in Goose Bay, in which Moss Development secured \$5.1 million to do a six-bed mental health facility for that town, who assures me 100 per cent of the people that company is going to employ will be from Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Again, I'll take the answer as a no.

The question to the minister is: Will they commit to 100 per cent Newfoundland and Labrador content and tradespeople doing the mental health facility, the one that's being built here in St. John's?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, the contract is called, the terms of that employment has been called. We had some debate on this some time ago. You talk about 100 per cent; I sat on a flight from Goose Bay with a gentleman who is doing a shutdown in IOC or Wabush Mines, one or the other, who told me they could not find enough people to go to work on their crew. So how can we say 100 per cent of this province if we need expertise to come in from outside this province? How can anybody say that on any project?

I ask the hon. Member: If you're going to build a house, are you going to assure me that everything you put in this house is going to be made right here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

MR. PARROTT: Absolutely.

MR. BRAGG: But you can't – you can't. Where are you going to make a toilet in Newfoundland?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, in 2010, Hurricane Igor did significant damage in Little Catalina. Transportation and Infrastructure replaced a bridge with a culvert that is too low, allowing salt water and kelp to penetrate and be trapped in the inner estuary. The result is a very unpleasant stench. Municipal affairs and environment and Transportation and Infrastructure have been deferring to each other as to who has been responsible every since.

Will the current Minister of TI, who was last municipal affairs and environment when this issue was raised, order an immediate permanent fix?

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

MR. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for his concern for his district. I'm aware of the situation. I will have a further investigation on that situation and I will report back at a later time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you for the previous answer.

The Port Blandford-Winter Brook Rural Development Association is looking to rebuild station property in Lethbridge. They applied to Crown Lands two years ago and received assurances that they would receive the entire property. Subsequently, Crown Lands have issued a portion to another applicant.

How can Crown Lands rescind their initial confirmation and thus impede the community

from restoring this historic site and further developing tourism in the region?

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

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

I don't have the details on that particular issue, but I would be glad to discuss that with you, if you wish. I can report back to the House, or we can meet, individually, if you prefer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The government has announced a collection of task forces to plan the future of the economy of our province.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will there be places on these task forces for the elected MHAs of this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Of course these are very important task forces that we've asked for; one, obviously, to look at the economic opportunities in the province and another to look at how we can reimagine health care and do a 10-year health accord. I guess those are the two that the Member opposite is referring to.

The Member opposite has plenty of opportunity in the House to add voice and add recommendations. Obviously, we also want to have more integration of meetings. We've invited Members opposite – I know when I took over as Minister of Finance – to come and give me their input. We'll always value the input of MHAs in all of these task forces and welcome their voice in terms of how we can improve things in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I see the answer to that is no. We will have to try and input on the future of our economy in another manner.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been through a tough and challenging year. Enough is enough. Now is the time for action. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador need our leaders to lead. We do not need another election at this time.

I ask the minister: Will the Liberal government respect the motion of this House and not call an election in 2020?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, constantly in this House the Opposition has been speaking about an election. Some Members opposite, some leaders opposite have been musing about an election.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that we, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is incumbent upon us to follow the letter of the law as it exists today in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Education tell us if all students who had a seat on a school bus last year have been accommodated this year?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have been advised by the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District that all eligible students have been looked after. There is a process for courtesy seats on buses that has to be followed. I understand that where space exists that the administrators of schools are looking at the courtesy seating for those spaces.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, many students who had courtesy seating last year across this province did not get a seat this year and this issue has put undue pressure on school administrators.

It has come to my attention that a minister of the Liberal government is calling school administrators in my district who feel pressured by the call to find courtesy seating for the minister's constituents.

I ask the Minister of Education: What are parents who do not have a Cabinet minister as their MHA meant to do to ensure their children have a courtesy seat?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, courtesy seating, as has been traditional in this province, is courtesy seating. It is for students who live within 1.6 kilometres from the school. Every effort will be made where space is available, as has been the case every year, to look after courtesy students.

It looks different this year than it did in previous years, Mr. Speaker. The province had to purchase or secure, through private contractors, an additional 145 buses and the drivers for those buses. So for some schools there's more courtesy seating than there was last year; for some, unfortunately, there's less.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period – time for a quick question and a quick answer.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government boasts about investments in mental health. Despite this, we've learned this past week of the circumstances of the most recent death of an Innu child in the government's care, in this past year.

I ask the Minister of CSSD: What are the plans to ensure that this never happens again?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question from the Member. Let me say, first of all, Mr. Speaker, that the death is a sad loss. Certainly a child in care, it's a tragedy and my heart goes out to the child's family.

Our government recognizes, Mr. Speaker, that the system needs work, and that's what we're doing. We will ensure that we help strengthen the social system, and I'll lead the development of that action on prevention and early intervention.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 4, Bill 48.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Loan Act, 2020, Bill 47.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS Health Canada has concerns about vaping as it can increase exposure to harmful chemicals and lead to nicotine addiction, with youth being especially susceptible to its negative effects that include altered brain development, memory and concentration; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey, 2017, reported that 54 per cent of all students thought it would be “fairly easy” or “very easy” to get an e-cigarette with nicotine if they wanted one; and

WHEREAS a 2019 *British Medical Journal* survey of youth in Canada, England and the United States found that from 2017 to 2018 the prevalence of vaping for teens aged 16 to 19 jumped from 8.4 per cent to 14.6 per cent, representing a 74 per cent increase year over year;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House refer the following reference question to the Social Services Committee for immediate action and report back with recommendations by March 31, 2021: What can be done to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping in Newfoundland and Labrador?

This is moved by myself and seconded by the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private Member’s resolution entered by the Member for Lake Melville shall be the one that we debate this Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answer to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In his short life, Bell Island native and prolific entertainer Harry Hibbs recorded many albums and had a number of gold records.

Harry shared Newfoundland and Labrador music with the country and inspired many to pick up an instrument and to follow their musical dreams.

Harry’s music is legendary and continues to inspire, delight and entertain people today. His contributions to the musical culture and heritage of our province and the country are enormous.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to support the induction of Harry Hibbs into Canada’s Walk of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, I have a bit of kinship with Harry Hibbs, and I would say it’s definitely not in our musical talents. His is in the stratosphere, mine is sitting right here on this Chair. But we do have a kinship for our love for our native community of Bell Island, our love for this province and our love for promoting our culture and our music.

It was an honour for me, growing up on Bell Island, to have seen Harry Hibbs play a multitude of times, and when I went to university in Ontario, getting to sit and have a very open heart-to-heart conversation with him

in a whole different venue. So very proud of that, but as I started to dig deeper into Harry's significance in this country and in particular in our province about him promoting our culture and our musical heritage, it became aware to me that he was a giant among giants. A very unassuming individual, almost introverted to a certain degree, but when it came to music and promoting our culture and who he was, he was one who always stood at the top of the heap.

Someone once said if you went into a room of musicians, you didn't notice Harry Hibbs. If you went into a room of musicians and Harry Hibbs had an accordion, you didn't recognize anybody else. That talks to who he was and what he meant to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we look at his accomplishments. He had seven gold records in Canada. That would put him at the stellar levels.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, Mr. Speaker, stellar levels of people like Bryan Adams and Neil Young and people at that level. The height of the Canadian industry.

Harry's claim to fame, from my perspective, was he didn't forget where he came from. Each year he would take a month, come back to Newfoundland and Labrador and travel around here. He would buddy up with some of the noted musicians of the day: the Dick Nolans, the Joan Morrisseys, Tom T. Hall, a number of other people there, and they would do their tours. They would go to some of the smaller, isolated areas to ensure that those people still had an opportunity to know that their culture and their music was being promoted all over this world.

Mr. Speaker, I remember talking to a reporter a number of years ago and they said they followed Harry's career and once they reported: Harry Hibbs, the Elvis Presley of East Coast music. That speaks volumes of who he was and what he represented around this world.

Don Jamieson – as we know, a former MP and a leader in our political life, and a super broadcaster, as we all know, promoting our culture and that – once had said to me in an interview – I was doing something for the

university and we talked about Harry Hibbs and what he meant. He said, we would measure the level of people's commitment and dedication of patriots to Newfoundland and Labrador by how many Harry Hibbs records they had in their household. That was a testament, again, to what he stood for in Newfoundland and Labrador. A very unassuming individual who always dressed classy to show what he was doing was very important.

Mr. Speaker, I'll end on one note. Another noted entertainer, Damian Follett, wrote a song called "Harry's Song" and it says: "There would be no me without you." The "me" is a collective, meaning the Great Big Seas, the Shanneyganocks, the Ennis Sisters and the Eddie Eastmans and those, all of them would not have gotten their start had it not been for Harry Hibbs opening the doors for Newfoundland and Labrador and getting people in this country to accept our culture and our music.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we'll have an opportunity for this House to be able to support Harry's claim to get a star on the Walk of Fame.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a distinct honour for me to get to follow my hon. colleague from across the House. I had the pleasure of touring Bell Island with him and how proud the people are and how proud he is of Harry Hibbs. But more importantly than even that, although that's a great accomplishment in and of itself having the hon. Member being so proud, but I think all of us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are proud of the impact that he has made right across our country. Not just for musicians, although that's been amazing, but as an ambassador for our province.

As a Tourism Minister and the impact he's made from a tourism perspective, the fact that he's put Newfoundland and Labrador on a map early in the '70s, travelling to the capital of Bell Island, I think we'll call it, up there in Cambridge, but for

the most part, he's done a yeoman service for what the province has put out as a musician and tourism product. In addition to that, the start of musicians in our province has been made easier by the impact that Harry has made.

I would be more than happy to work with the hon. colleague and represent our government in pushing this initiative to get Harry's star on the Hollywood – on the Canadian Walk of Fame.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Hollywood.

MR. DAVIS: I think that's an important piece. Let's get one step at a time first, I guess.

I think it's an important gesture that the hon. Member has brought forward to this House. I look forward – I've signed the petition. I can't wait to write the letter to our colleagues, federally, and get them on board as well. This is a fitting tribute to a gentleman that has provided so much to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in such an unassuming way.

I would just like to thank the hon. Member for bringing that forward. Seven gold records is not even his biggest accomplishment. I think his biggest accomplishment is the love he has for our province and the people that he supported in giving that approach.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for bringing this forward in a petition form.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start off by congratulating the Member for Mount Scio on her new family addition. She's from Grand Falls-Windsor and we couldn't be more proud. I know her parents quite well and I'm sure they're very proud as well. The Opposition wish her the best of luck in her future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, I'll take a minute here and just tell a little story, first of all. I was working in Alberta in 2012-2013 and when I was up there we went to – I filled in on an older dingy rig, a big rig, and the rig manager at the time, we called him a tool push in the oil patch. He tried to order us some new lanyards, some new belts, so we could climb 110 feet into the air with three-foot sway and for a year straight he tried to order us new ones. These were old, dingy, oily and should have been taken out of service a long, long time ago. Cuts – taking our lives in our own hands some days. He would drop it on a phone call every single week when he'd put in his requisitions for the next week coming up and he'd always get turned down. He'd mention it once, mention it again and he'd get turned down.

We had a new tool push come out and fill in, and the day he got there he made one phone call after he seen these lanyards and these fall arrests that our lives depended on. He called the office and said he needs six sent out today, without any negotiation or there was a stop-work order going in right away. That rig was billed out at \$38,000 a day; they couldn't afford a stop work.

He slammed down the phone, no negotiations whatsoever. The phone rang five minutes later and he was told there was going to be six on a hotshot; \$1,200 to get them sent out right away. He made the plea that his men that worked with

him were not going to work one more minute without those life-saving devices. He fought for us and I'll never forget that man until the day I die and how he made us feel because he put us first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, I kind of want to relate this to our issues here with Ottawa. Over the past little while here, the past year, the past five years, we've been asking for Ottawa – the new Premier campaigned on the fact that his friends in Ottawa, his relationships in Ottawa were going to get us what we needed. Everybody in the province were quite smitten with that, we were hoping it was going to happen. Nothing has happened yet.

We can talk about \$320 million all day long, but, at the end of the day, it's pennies in a bucket for an industry that is hurting. It's hurting here in Newfoundland and Labrador and, more, it's hurting the families and the workers that work in that industry.

One of two things are happening here and the people of the province deserve to know. It's either this current provincial government is satisfied with their friends in Ottawa, in which case, in my opinion, they don't deserve to represent the province. Or this current provincial government does not have the guts to take on Ottawa and fight to put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, in which they do not deserve to represent the province.

Mr. Speaker, in order to take on Ottawa, in my opinion, more needs to be done. I truly believe that if this was Bombardier in Quebec or some sort of car factory in Oshawa, there would be more money coming. I truly believe that the silence is deafening from this government to their friends in Ottawa and it's absolutely sickening to the people across the province.

For all the levers that are pulled and all the stones that are being turned, Mr. Speaker, that's the jargon that we've been hearing for the past couple of months, when I thought about that rig manager, I thought to myself, for a year the old rig manager, the old tool push did what he could – he said he did what he could. It didn't work so something different had to be done. I feel as

though we're at that point now and something different has to be done. We need a government here in Newfoundland and Labrador that's going to stand up for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and put us first when it comes to Ottawa and the rest of the country.

Those guys in Quebec, those guys in Ontario, they get what they want because they care about their people and they put them first. They'll fight tooth and nail to make sure they get what they want. We are a province in the country of Canada, the greatest country in the world. We are, in my opinion, the best province in Canada. We need to get exactly what we deserve as well. I feel as though there's nobody fighting for us in that fight. We need to do better and we can do better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans elected me, they had faith in me and to tell you the truth, they didn't even know me at the time, but they did take a chance on me and I couldn't be happier for that. It truly gave me an opportunity to sit or stand here today and speak on behalf of them, but it's extrapolated across the province. I'm not just speaking for them; I'm speaking for everybody in the province.

We have a lot of issues here in the province. We hear all day long how we can see the glass half full, how there are all kinds of different announcements and whatnot, sod turnings, signing beams. Mr. Speaker, it's almost time to get out of your office and get out onto the streets and talk to the real people of the province and their issues. Go to their homes.

I've been doing it since the day I got elected. I do house calls. I'll go to somebody's home all week long and I'll sit and talk with them because I truly care. I believe a lot of people care in this House, but sometimes it gets lost within the politics itself. Eventually, you lose sight. I promise the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans I'll never lose sight. If the day comes where I lose sight, I'll pack my bags and walk out the back door. I'm done. But for now I'm going to keep them in mind and for now I'm going to fight for them, just like I hope the rest of us do here.

Mr. Speaker, it's beyond me how, these phone calls with Ottawa, we're not getting a daily update. It's beyond me how somebody hasn't put their arse on a plane and brought themselves to Ottawa and sat and spoke with the prime minister or spoke with his people. That's all we hear all day long is that we're working on it; we're working on it; we're working on it. We are out of time. The people of this province are out of time.

Do you know how scared the people of the province are because of Christmas, what should be an absolutely joyous time? The people of the province are terrified of Christmas because there are people who are going to have to look at their children, who have worked 25 and 30 years –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: I'm not sure what I heard, but I'm quite sure I heard some unparliamentary language just a phrase or two ago. I just remind you to perhaps look at *Hansard* and review if you didn't hear it yourself.

MR. SPEAKER: I will review the transcript and rule on that.

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: It's good to see where the Member's thoughts are today instead of the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: I apologize for nothing, Mr. Speaker. I'm telling it like it is here today. I sit with these people day in and day out, and I suggest everybody do the exact same thing. If I can get back to my point, Mr. Speaker, like I was on before I was rudely interrupted.

The people of this province have Christmas coming up. There are people in this province who have worked 25 and 30 years, worked their butts off, 60 and 70 hours a week some weeks, that have to look at their kids now and tell them there can't be any Christmas presents, Christmas tree, Christmas dinner. This is almost poverty,

Mr. Speaker. It truly is. We have to work together and try to get them out as best we can, and try to work for the province, work for the people of the province.

In Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans in the past year and a half, what have we seen from the government? Little to nothing. I tell you what, when I took office a year and a half ago we had a building; we had a million dollars in the bank for the Lionel Kelland Hospice. There's no building to be built. We need some renovations to get some people in there to die with dignity. Nothing's been done with that yet. Where in God's green earth do you have a building, a million dollars in the bank from the community, I might add, and nothing gets done? Why? Whose district is it? I'm going to call it out.

Mr. Speaker, just down from the Lionel Kelland Hospice – which I would like to see being built very, very soon because a lot of people are depending on it. We are the only province in Canada that does not have a community hospice. It's absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, just down the street from that, we have the long-term health care centre in Grand Falls-Windsor. We talk about 95 per cent or 90 per cent or 85 per cent. We have to go down there, we have to look at six plumbers, seven insulators and I know you're going to look at the numbers. If I can make a suggestion to the government across, get your nose out of the books, stop looking at numbers and go visit the place. I guarantee you; you'll see a difference in your numbers and from what's down there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, I have people in Grand Falls-Windsor, I have plumbers who have worked in the trade for 20 years literally on Scott Avenue, living across the street, watching Quebec workers come in from the hardest hit COVID province in this country to do the work that they can do. Numbers don't mean a damn thing when you hear about that – nothing.

The numbers, you could have them all day long but when it comes to the workers, go visit with them. Go talk to them. These workers are passing through the hallways with other workers and they're supposed to be isolating. We'll

isolate our own people but we'll take them in from Quebec all day long without anything. That is a shame. That is a complete shame.

We just talked about the Member for Terra Nova. He was asked: Would you have everything in your house local. I would have it as local as I could, but the real question is: Would you have local people build your house? I'm sure you would. I'm sure you'd have local people build your house because we need jobs here in Newfoundland and Labrador. This place will sink if we do not have jobs. We have to fight for those jobs, just like the other provinces are doing.

This Liberal federal government is no friend of Newfoundland and Labrador, let me tell you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: They are oil and gas job killers, and I do not need a lecture or a notebook to find that out because I've lived it.

Mr. Speaker, I was talking to a friend of mine in Alberta last night. He's lost three friends, three dads, who have committed suicide. I'm being told – and I don't know the numbers so don't quote me on it, but he is telling me now that suicides have claimed more lives throughout Western Canada, especially in Alberta, than COVID-19. That's sad.

This Liberal government wants to go towards green initiatives. I couldn't agree more, but there's a time for that. That transition has to be done. In Canada, we have the fourth largest oil reserve on the planet. This oil and gas is going to be around for quite some time and it's going to be on the market for quite some time. Those other countries are going to scoop it up and gobble it up and they're going to have jobs galore, while Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador are left in the dark once again because we do not have somebody fighting for our jobs here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm sick of it. I'm tired of it, and so are the people across the province and we won't have it any more.

Mr. Speaker, in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans we do have some people working in the oil and gas as well. They depend on it. Their families depend on it. We constantly hear the Minister of

Energy talk about there's a worldwide pandemic; there are problems with oil and gas around the world, throughout Canada. It doesn't matter, we're in Newfoundland and Labrador, let's focus on that. I'm sure we could focus on that.

Like I say, if this was Bombardier in Quebec, there'd be money on the table for them because they have somebody fighting for them. They have somebody yelling for them, and we need to. Forget about pulling levers, rip the thing off the wall and throw it and get somebody's attention, that's what I say, because we need attention here and we're not getting it.

The government are supposed to be our voice in Ottawa and we're searching for that voice still because we haven't seen it yet. All these non announcements on stage with the Natural Resources minister, the federal one, they mean nothing. They only make people more upset. Stop with the non announcements, work to get it done and get us an announcement that works for us.

Two hundred million dollars to a casino in Ontario, is that what I heard? Two hundred million dollars to a casino in Ontario and we're given \$320 million to save one of the biggest industries for the whole province. It's absolutely shameful and we won't have anymore of it.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take a quick moment here to just talk about my own District of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. I have a constituent of mine, John Shearing, 63 years old, been cutting wood since he's been six years old. He's being sent on the Bay d'Espoir Highway to get wood now while 20 truckloads of wood leave our area to go east or west. Now, I'm all about fair play and getting good business on the go. I don't mind it at all, but we need a comprehensive review of Central Newfoundland and the people and their ancestors who have cut wood there for over 100 years. They're being left out in the cold. Why? I want to know why.

Eric Osmond has been cutting wood for 65 years – he's almost 80 – up in Millertown. He can't get wood. He cannot get wood, and he owns a sawmill in Millertown and employs seven people. The town only has 85 people in it and he employs seven, and he has trouble getting wood.

Literally, those trucks have to pass by his house every single day and it absolutely disgusts us up in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of health care waits of course in Grand Falls-Windsor and right throughout the district; many people have health care waits. We talked a while ago about one in five people do not have a family doctor. You have walk-in clinics and stuff like that; you can revert to them, but let me tell you what that looks like.

When somebody calls for a doctor and they're told we're not taking any more patients, we're not taking any more patients, we're not taking any more patients. Do you know what that makes somebody say? That makes somebody say, well, it's a small pain or it's a small ailment, we'll ignore it, we'll let it be. That small ailment or pain can quickly turn into something much more serious. It can turn into a cancer, and that's exactly what's happening. I've had people in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans who couldn't get in to see a doctor and now they have cancer and are waiting to get it cut out and are waiting a long, long time still. That, too, is shameful.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the Buchans Highway, it's not in bad shape. There are some places that could be fixed up, but I've wanted brush cutting up there for a long, long time now and we still haven't seen it this summer. Derm Corbett, the mayor of Buchans himself, I was up to see him on Friday, he said he almost hit two moose the night before, very barely missing one. We know how important brush cutting is to our district, to all districts throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It's our first line of defence. God forbid if somebody gets hurt up there, it's going to be sad.

Crown Lands is another one, Mr. Speaker. I don't know why people are waiting 90 days just to get an application number, and then waiting years upon years to get a piece of Crown land. A lot of people are getting very frustrated with it. It's a department – and it's no reflection of the people that work in the department themselves, but something needs to be done. People are waiting too long for this stuff and they're getting fed up with it to the point where they withdraw their application. To me, it's not good enough, not by any means.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just take the last couple of minutes here to talk about mental health issues. They're on the rise, there's no doubt about it. Not only are the mental health issues on the rise, the addictions that come with it. COVID-19 has certainly set in the addictions, whether it be alcohol or drugs, here in the province, it's definitely on the rise. With that also comes crime. Crime will be on the rise as well. So it's something that we all need to keep an eye on as we move forward here.

I implore anybody across the province, check on your elderly, check on your neighbours, check on those who you think may be lonely or may be left out in the dark, because a dinner invitation or a sincere: How are you today? That can go a long way and I implore everybody across the province to do that with your neighbours and your family because it seems like it's going to get a lot worse before it gets better right now. I think I alluded to it last week, Mr. Speaker, mental-health sickness is going to take more lives than COVID-19. I guarantee it will and it already has, in my opinion, in some places.

We need to make sure we keep an eye on that. When I look at those families out there that are really suffering, they're looking to us for solutions, for answers, and I truly believe that we do not have a voice in Ottawa, and that is a big thing. We're not going to Ottawa looking for a handout, again; we are looking for a hand up. It's taxpayer's money. How much money has the oil and gas generated for the rest of the country? It just seems like this federal government just wants to put a foot on the head of those that are drowning now, and that's just sad to see. I think that if we were a lot louder and we took the time to maybe go up there, talk with them, do your two-week isolation when you get back. But we need a stronger voice in Ottawa, and I'll say that moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

So for all of those out there, I know that we're trying to do the best that we can on this side. When we have Question Period and we ask questions across the way and they get scoffed at or laughed at, I can guarantee you that those questions don't come from just my head. We are the representation for the people of the province; those questions come from the people of the province. If they were sat here today, they would

be asking you, and that's exactly why I'm sat here. Somebody said to me a while ago: What makes you so popular? I said: I don't know. They said: I'll tell you. I said: What? They said: You're one of us. And I'll continue to be one of the common people here in the province, Mr. Speaker, and they have a voice in me until the day I die.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I bide my time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak on the Budget Speech today. I was thinking earlier, this is actually the 26th Budget Speech that I've spoken to. You would think I would be used to it by now, but I find that you always learn something new and there's always something different as you're debating the budget and listening to others speak.

I will say that when you look at this year's budget compared to other budgets in other jurisdictions, we've done very, very well. I know that it's unprecedented times. We've kind of been put back on our heels a little bit, but no different than any other jurisdiction in Canada, or globally for that matter.

When you look at the budget put forward in this province, yes, we've got, not the highest deficit the province has ever had, although it's probably the most difficult year that we've had financially in the province since the collapse of the cod fishery, Mr. Speaker. But the reality is when you look at our province compared to other provinces who were expecting surpluses and have billion-dollar or multi-billion-dollar deficits, we've actually fared relatively well, given the difficult circumstances, the unprecedented times and what's happening as a result of COVID within the economy and the fact that the economy had essentially been shut down for two or three months.

When you look at what's happening in this province in handling the pandemic, we've done

exceptionally well, and I would say probably looked at by many jurisdictions, globally, to see how it is and what it is we're doing in dealing with the pandemic. Yes, that's not to speak lightly of the people who have been affected because COVID and the effects of COVID are very, very serious, but when you look at how this province has dealt with it and minimized the number of cases and community spread, I would say that we're probably the envy of many, many jurisdictions globally.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about some of the things that are happening in the province and some of the opportunities that are there, even though we faced some challenges with COVID, but some of the opportunities. If you look at the tech sector, the speed and the growth within the tech sector and the opportunity within the tech sector in this province, and techNL, or formerly known as NATI, the work that they've been doing with some of the companies that are national and global leaders like Verafin, Kraken, GRi and Bluedrop or others.

I guess the concern or the problem with naming some is that you can't name them all, but there are many tech companies in this province, Mr. Speaker, that are competing globally, are known globally for the work they're doing and employing a lot of people in this province. You can work in this province as easily as you can work in Silicone Valley or in London, the UK, or in Toronto, Ontario, you can work anywhere in the tech sector. This province has seized that opportunity. The companies in this province have seized that opportunity and have grown and done very, very well.

There is an opportunity, and as techNL have pointed out, we will need and be able to provide thousands of jobs over the next two or three years in this province through the tech sector. Our government has introduced coding in schools, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at other opportunities to help provide the workforce of tomorrow as this industry grows but there is tremendous opportunity in the tech sector.

We have to look at one of the challenges in the tech sector is the fact that there are more jobs than there are people going into those jobs. When somebody signs up at Memorial University or the College of the North Atlantic

to go into one of the IT programs, long before they're finished they're offered a job in the IT sector because there is such a demand for those workers.

We need to look, within my department, at expanding the number of seats and expanding the availability of courses to people in this province because it is a job where people can train here. They can work here; they can live here. If we can produce more graduates, Mr. Speaker, every one of those graduates will get jobs. It is something that we need to look at. I've had discussions with our public post-secondary institutions and a couple of our private post-secondary institutions on that as well.

We have been working with techNL and our educational system on other opportunities that may be available within the tech sector and to get more people into the tech sector, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly something that as a government and as MHAs we have a responsibility to let people going through the high school system, even let them know that this is a tremendous career opportunity and a very, very solid career within this province. It's an area where we're able to keep people in this province and, in fact, attract newcomers to the province as well.

When you look at the College of the North Atlantic, over the last couple of years we've looked at the Centre of Excellence for aquaculture, for example, on the Burin Peninsula. The reason we chose aquaculture: again, it's a growth sector. If you look at Norway – and I can't remember the exact numbers – they produce about 60 per cent of farmed salmon globally, I believe is the number. We're producing about 5 per cent of what they produce.

We have 27,000 kilometres of coastline here. Not all of our coastline is suitable for aquaculture, but certainly along the South Coast and in those areas we have lots of area for growth in the aquaculture centre. It's something that this province has looked at as part of *The Way Forward*.

Again, looking at the College of the North Atlantic on the Burin Peninsula and redefining that as a Centre of Excellence for aquaculture.

Mr. Speaker, if we can grow the industry – things such as smolt or the netting and cages, for example, currently it's not viable to produce that in this province. If the aquaculture industry grows, as we believe it will and as we believe it should, Mr. Speaker, we will have the opportunity with the growth of that industry to see spinoff industries and the growth of spinoff as well.

You can look at the production of feed as one of those areas. As I said, the smolt or producing the netting and cages for the aquaculture industry. So there's plenty of opportunity there. If you look at the Irish model as an example, where you educate first and, if you educate, the opportunities will follow. That's part of the reason we looked at the Centre of Excellence for aquaculture on the Burin Peninsula.

Looking at that, we've also – similarly, the College of the North Atlantic in Corner Brook for the agriculture and forestry sector. I had the opportunity to visit that recently, Mr. Speaker, and the opportunity out there and training people for the agriculture industry.

I've said in the House on previous occasions, we produce about 10 per cent of the root vegetables that are consumed in the province. If you go back 60 or 80 years ago, as my colleague across the way would know, the province produced far greater numbers of what was consumed here. About 70 or 80 years ago, 100 per cent of what was consumed here was produced here in terms of root vegetables. We now have a greater reliance on other jurisdictions for that, Mr. Speaker.

So it's an area of growth. We've seen more and more young people get into the agriculture industry. Again, part of the reason we've designated the Corner Brook College of the North Atlantic to focus primarily on agriculture and forestry is because there are growth opportunities there. Government, in the last two or three years, has designated more land provincially to be used only for agriculture. The future use of that land will only be agriculture.

As the industry grows, looking at items like cold storage to allow the industry to grow and expand the sales season for that industry and the opportunity for farmers to have considerably

more months of sales and lengthen that season, it will create more opportunities as well. We're looking at areas where traditionally – in addition to the new areas like the IT sector, but traditionally would've provided greater numbers of employment and greater opportunity in the province. So, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at that.

I've visited the Marine Institute several times. Twice now since becoming Minister of Education, but I visited prior to that. For any Member of the Legislature who hasn't been there, I encourage you to go and have a look. It is known globally for ocean technology and the education they provide to those that work in the marine fields. It's an incredible facility. If you look at the simulators, and they have a number of simulators there, it's absolutely incredible.

We actually cut the ribbon last week on one of the simulators that was manufactured by a local company, GRi, and Kraken was involved, I believe, with the robotics for that simulator. So there were a couple of companies involved in that. As I said, these companies are known globally for what they do. They're providing their expertise globally. The simulator that we cut the ribbon on last week at the Marine Institute was essentially built by these local companies and it is absolutely incredible.

I had the opportunity, and while I'm not one of the – my generation is long before the Xbox or PlayStation, Mr. Speaker, so I was a little concerned when I sat in the chair. The chair is where you sit with all of the controls. It looks like something that would have come out of *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*, very high-end robotics and controls. Absolutely incredible.

When I sat in the chair and was asked to perform one of the underwater simulations, I was a little nervous not having that – the kids today, where they're used to the videogames and Xbox and so on, I imagine would walk into the simulators and just know how to operate them almost immediately. It was incredibly easy to operate, and it speaks to the expertise in building this simulator.

We took an underwater craft, robotics to – it was actually a submarine, Mr. Speaker, that had gotten caught in some cables and netting under water and was essentially stuck on the ocean

floor. So we took the underwater robotics in, we grabbed the cable and cut it. It was all simulation, but this simulator prepares students for the real world. It is so lifelike in how it operates that when our students leave the Marine Institute, after the education and operating these simulators, they can go anywhere in the world and operate the underwater robotics.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there will come a day – and in some cases it's happening now – where you can sit in St. John's, where the expertise is as a result of the Marine Institute, and operate robotics somewhere else in the world. That can happen right now today. That's the growth of that industry and how we see that industry.

If you look at Canada's ocean economy, many people in the province don't realize but we own about 50 per cent of the entirety of Canada's ocean economy. When you look at things like the ocean supercluster and the advantages that's going to provide, tapping into that, Mr. Speaker, this province is going to benefit significantly from that.

The model used by the Marine Institute I've often spoke about, where they have such a close connection with industry and work with industry as they look towards the future in what programming will be needed and what courses will be needed, is certainly a model we can look at with not only our public, but our private post-secondary institutions as well, and create that.

On that note, the public post-secondary review, we anticipate getting the report from them within the next couple of months, Mr. Speaker. I know when they set out to do that review, part of it was looking at post-secondary education and what it looks like for the future, focusing on how our post-secondary institutions build their relationship with private industry, looking at training people for tomorrow.

One of the things that I hope we see come out of that is how we stay ahead of the curve; how we look at training people for jobs that exist as opposed to training people for jobs that don't exist and having people graduate and educate people simply so that they would have to move away. There are opportunities here, as I said, in the tech sector.

One opportunity where we should be training more people, because there is such a huge demand in the tech sector for employees. We need to start focusing and staying ahead of the curve so that the training we're providing in our post-secondary institution will be training people for the jobs that exist and for future jobs. That's something that I hope to see come out of the post-secondary review.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are a couple of minutes left on the clock in my time to speak. I do want to speak a little about some of – I know in some of the seniors' buildings, for example, in my district, I'd be there constantly for social events. I miss that because of the restrictions as a result of COVID. When you look at COVID, not only has it affected the economy, Mr. Speaker, but you look at how it's affected families and sometimes the ability for people to get into a building where visitation or visitors are restricted. We're learning to deal with that and how that looks in the future.

I know I can say, certainly, as one individual looking forward to the time when COVID is not such an impediment or doesn't consume so much time and energy and resources in trying to deal with or live with COVID, looking forward to the time when we're able to get life back a little bit more to normal and visit the places that we're used to visiting and getting into, Mr. Speaker, or even going to a shopping centre and not having to wear a mask, for example. I'm looking forward to those times.

Having said that, as I've indicated at the outset of this, our province is the envy of the world in how we've dealt with COVID and how we've protected our people. For that, I really have to send kudos to our public health officials, the chief medical officer of Health and our Minister of Health for the job they've done here in protecting this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start by first talking about the wonderful District of Topsail - Paradise that I represent. I do appreciate the confidence that the residents have placed in me. It's a job I take very seriously. I thank them for their support and hopefully their continued support.

My approach has always been, whether I was volunteering or on the town council or in my last two years as a Member, is if one person brings an issue to you or a thousand people bring an issue to you, it's an issue that's worth addressing. The other thing residents would have heard me say: I don't care if the person has two horns and a pointy tail, if they have an issue and in my district, I'm dealing with it.

The District of Topsail - Paradise, of course, is a wonderful district. I'm not going to get pushed out of that district any time soon. I suspect I'm there for the long term. It's very much a rural setting but with all the urban amenities. There are a huge number of young families in the district. They participate in a lot of sports activities, arts programs, Scouts, Guides. In the surrounding area I have four schools, K to 6 schools, a K to 4 school. A new school opening, hopefully, in the fall, a middle school. A lot of school kids.

I guess like any other community too, a huge, huge volunteer group. I think all would agree, we'd be nowhere without our volunteers and probably more so now during these uncertain times with COVID.

Our seniors certainly are very involved. I have two 50-plus clubs that operate in the district: the Worsley Park 50+ Club and the Paradise Adventure 50+ Club. They do quite a lot of activities throughout the year. I know they're finding it hard now with the COVID restrictions, but I think they're slowly getting back to a sense of normal, with their darts, their talent nights and open mic. We have a huge arts community that deals with art fairs, craft fairs and fundraisers.

So it's a wonderful district. It's not without some issues that I deal with on a daily basis. Some of the larger issues for the district, of course, is the 1.6-kilometre busing. I know earlier, late last week or the week before, in Estimates the minister responsible indicated that

his focus is on dealing with the busing concerns around COVID and that the 1.6 probably would not be addressed this year. So I'm really hopeful that it continues to be on the agenda and it gets addressed sooner rather than later, because it's an extremely important issue and a safety issue.

We also have some issues on Route 60 through Topsail, I raised them again and again with the past minister who was responsible and the current minister and I'll continue to do so. We have other issues that haven't come to the forefront yet, but when you talk about the federal regulations now on waste water fluid treatment, that's going to be a huge expense for the district that we need to talk about and, as well, there's areas within the district without water and sewer.

A wonderful district, but we do have some concerns that need to be addressed and I'm going to continue to push those issues and get something done with them, sooner rather than later. I know the district looks forward to a time when they can return to some sense of normal with everything.

Going to the budget, and we're talking about the budget here, I have a number of thoughts with limited time, but I'll do what I can with it. Firstly, what I noticed with the budget, the theme that ran through the Budget Speech had to deal with the theme of reimagine. In fact, the word "reimagine" was mentioned a number of times. It talked about reimagining government. It talked about reimagining service delivery. It talked about reimagining health. It talked about reimagining our economy. It talked about reimagining our programs and services. It talked about rethinking accessible transportation. It talked about a renewed poverty reduction strategy. I find that troubling, that after five years of this government that they're now rejigging to rethink, to recreate, to reimagine when we waited five years for something to happen.

I don't know, did Newfoundlanders and Labradorians just imagine this or was it just a bad dream? Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cannot afford another moment of rethinking, reimagining and recreating. Newfoundlanders cannot afford any more time of dreaming of a

way forward. I think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want, demand and need action.

I looked at *Budget 2016*, the first budget that came in with this government, and I'll quote what it says. It says: "Led by our Premier, backed by the strength and the skill of the Cabinet and Caucus, we will gather the facts, analyze the data, make plans and execute and evaluate our performance."

"We will hold ourselves accountable. We will get results."

AN HON. MEMBER: In five year's time.

MR. P. DINN: Five years ago. I go back and here we are reimagining, rethinking, redoing, recreating. Maybe you want to recycle; recycle our poverty reduction plan if you want to "re-" anything.

This is the time. Time is not on our side. We now have a new Premier who says we will be doing things differently, because it appears to be much of the same. The new Premier – we're going to do things differently. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want action and results. Wow, five years; figured that one out.

After five years, this government is establishing a task force on Oil and Gas Industry Recovery, but it's not that long ago this government created the Oil and Gas Corporation. "The oil and gas corporation" – again, this is their literature – "will work with industry stakeholders, and the department, to support the implementation of Advance 2030. It will continue to focus on developing oil and gas resources and attracting exploration investment to our province. The corporation will also focus on local supply and service industry opportunities, which will help create jobs and business opportunities for the people of the province."

I go back to the Premier's point, doing things differently. That was never done, there's nothing differently happening here, just another task force established.

Then you move to a Rate Mitigation Team. Another team, rate mitigation, government released this plan on rate mitigation. It touted

that their solution was going to be 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour. Now, it appears they misspoke and we now have to rethink that plan, so what better way than create another team. Even though everyone in this House was an elected official and people depend on us to make the decisions and work and our expertise, we have another team on rate mitigation. I can guarantee you, I can almost bet that 13.5 cents commitment will no longer exist – doing things differently again.

Now they've established an Economic Recovery Team – doing things differently. Government created a team to “review expenditures across government, analyze our fiscal capacity and reimagine government service delivery.” Sound familiar?

This government spent \$1 million to have McKinsey & Company develop an Economic Growth Strategy for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to identify areas that can stimulate growth, provide detailed sector plans, cross-cutting approaches and enable the collaboration and commitments of improving government operations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): Order, please!

MR. P. DINN: We just did that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'd like to ask everybody to keep the noise volume down so I can hear the speaker.

MR. P. DINN: I appreciate that, Madam Speaker.

Again, doing things differently.

MR. BRAGG: (Inaudible.)

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DINN: I appreciate that the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels over there is a bit appalled at the factual information I'm presenting here, but I would let him speak, I prefer he'd do the same for me as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DINN: Here we also look at a renewed 10-year poverty reduction plan; another team, another plan, another reimagine. “Our government plans to develop a renewed 10-year poverty reduction” plan to rethink approaches.

In 2005, the PC government of the time released a poverty reduction strategy. This was applauded as a leading-edge approach and resulted in the poverty rate being reduced from 20 per cent to 11 per cent. As I said earlier, if you want to rethink, redo, recreate, I have no problem. Recycle that plan if you want to address poverty. Again, doing things differently.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have tasked us as elected officials with looking after their best interests, district by district and as a province as a whole. They didn't task committees, they didn't task companies and they didn't task surveys. Those are helpful tools, but when you use up all the tools in the box, it's probably time to get down to action, probably time to drive that nail. We're not there yet, after five years.

As an Opposition, we have been doing what we can to hold government accountable – that's our job – and to advocate on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We pushed for affordable child care and we're happy to see government see the benefits in affordable child care. We've pushed for the expansion of the Insulin Pump Program and we are happy government heard us loud and clear. We pushed for –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. P. DINN: Action is good, but I call it delayed action, five years later. Anyway, that's another matter.

We pushed for more incentives in the offshore exploration and government appears to be starting to listen. They appear to start to be listening.

MS. COADY: More action.

MR. P. DINN: I appreciate the Deputy Premier commenting. Thank you for that. You're looking

for what we're looking for: action. We want to see some action. Not reaction, but action.

We have brought to the forefront concerns Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have had related to an array of issues such as our declining population; the lack of incremental, long-term meaningful employment; the need for better broadband and many industry- and resource-related improvements. I'm really hopeful they'll start to listen. If they can't do anything to help, then step aside and we can jump in there – any time, any day.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, they want actions and they want solutions and they deserve actions and they deserve solutions. They deserve a full and honest picture and they want the whole picture. I'll give you an example. People want to know right upfront what we're dealing with. We work for them. We report to them. We're not the bosses here. I'm so honoured and privileged to sit in this House and work for the people of Topsail - Paradise, and I'm going to continue to do that.

As an example, when government is touting the tremendous success of the MyGovNL website and how registration has grown by 1,400 per cent since March, now I'm not sure if they're trying to insult us by implying that that's a fabulous site. It may be a fabulous site. I question the results. I don't think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians out there are naive to think that that 1,400 per cent increase is the result of this fabulous site. This is a result of COVID. This is a result of government sites, government front desk operations not being available. Residents had to go to MyGovNL, but what's also missing here is some residents could not go to MyGovNL. So let's keep the story real; tell it like it is.

To sum up to close, this budget in its own words is reimagining, rethinking and rejigging a five-year plan that went nowhere. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cannot afford anymore time, lost time. As I said, there have been some bright spots and it seems that government is starting to listen to the people, through the Opposition. That seems to be happening.

I just go back to how I started. I was elected by the people of Topsail - Paradise to look into their

interests and I will continue to do so for them and the province as a whole. I really don't care where the solutions come from – I really don't – as long as they are destined to have a positive impact on our residents. I hear people say there's a reason your windshield is bigger than your rear-view mirror, so you continue to look ahead. You look ahead to where you're going.

I saw another quote that says: Our eyes are in the front because it's better to look ahead than to look back. Don't dwell on things of the past, learn from them and keep moving forward. We owe it to our residents to be open, accountable and transparent and dedicated to the jobs that we were elected to do.

It's great to use the little sayings, we're going to turn over every rock, every stone, every whatever we can. We're turning it over. We've turned it over. I say we could build a whole berm or breakwater with what's been turned over here.

You get to the lever; we're going to pull every lever. Now, this is what goes back to rethinking, reimagining, rejigging and recreating. I'm going to pull the lever on that slot machine and hope I get lucky. This is far too serious a situation we are in to try and gamble on luck and broken promises and hope and reimagining again. This is terrible.

I look at you talk about the connections with our federal counterparts. I read the headline from our federal Minister of Natural Resources. This was his headline now. This was his headline when he spoke about no equity share. We're going to have the \$320 million. The headline, this is his: "This Is What I Wanted."

I don't care what he wanted. We're here for what the people want. We're not here for what –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DINN: – the Natural Resources minister wants, really and truly. I can't believe he had the kahunas – I guess I'm allowed to say that, I don't know – to say that, really. I really don't.

Anyway, I'm down to my last few seconds. I really do hope we get together and start seeing

some real progress here. If not for the sake of us individually, but for our province as a whole.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Just for the people at home who are watching, we're here today and we're discussing *Budget 2020*.

Madam Speaker, the District of Placentia - St. Mary's has a population of just over 13,000 people. It covers a land mass area of over 3,800 kilometres. It literally has four sections. It has the St. Mary's Bay North section; it has the Cape Shore section, the Placentia and Trinity South. It's a very big district. However, Madam Speaker, as I have said every single time I get an opportunity, there is one very important issue that has been a very active issue since the day I was elected in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's and that is roads and road infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, *Budget 2020* allocates \$4.6 million to replace heavy equipment for winter highway maintenance. A significant number of the residents of the District of Placentia - St. Mary's commute in over the Trans-Canada Highway daily to work. Madam Speaker, many seniors and those who are ill travel over the Trans-Canada Highway in ambulance to access emergency services here in St. John's. So heavy equipment is a much needed investment and I applaud *Budget 2020* for having the \$4.6 million allocated to this new equipment.

Madam Speaker, our children travel up to 40 minutes on a school bus in the winter, so winter maintenance is very important; \$2 million has been allocated to brush cutting along our provincial highways. The communities of St. Joseph's, Old Shop and Hopeall literally have brush touching the side of the road right now as I speak here in the House of Assembly, and we have numerous areas where moose are crossing. We have one 80-kilometer road between North

Harbour and Branch that has a significant number of moose crossing. We've had numbers of near misses and a lot of accidents.

SOPAC, the Save Our People Action Committee, has the following statistics on their website. "On average there are over 700 moose vehicle accidents in the province, involving several human deaths, not including accidents under \$1,000 or near misses.

"Hunters have a moose kill ratio of about 73%. Out of the 33,000 licenses about 20,000 are filled. Since 40,000 calves are born each year, the resulting population is growing."

Madam Speaker, brush cutting is an act of maintaining safety on our highways. It's a needed investment. It's a good investment in *Budget 2020*.

Madam Speaker, road infrastructure is very important to the residents of the District of Placentia - St. Mary's and it's very important to the residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If you cannot get around the province, you cannot promote it and you cannot sustain it.

A tender was just awarded for Route 100 for Dunville. They will pulverize and pave approximately 3.1 kilometres. Route 91, Southeast Placentia, again, paved and pulverized, 3.1 kilometres. So that's a little over six kilometres in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's. There will also be some guide rails put in around Ferndale.

Madam Speaker, I have been encouraging all the residents of my district to express their opinions on road infrastructure when the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure opens up the consultation portion on engageNL in the very near future. Road infrastructure is outlined in *Budget 2020* and it's a very good investment. I'm sure every Member in this House of Assembly agrees that road infrastructure is a good investment.

Budget 2020 includes \$23 million for upgrades to existing health care facilities; \$20.4 million will go towards the construction of the adult health and addictions facility right here in St. John's. This is a facility that we have been

advocating and promoting for a number of years. We are very happy that our government has been able to turn the sod and start this building.

Madam Speaker, I was a Member of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and the voice of the community was very strong. We heard loud and clear that a new facility needed to be physically located in a place that would help alleviate stigma, and our government acted on that. The new facility will be attached to the present Health Sciences complex. Every person in Newfoundland and Labrador deserves to have their medical needs attended to without the fear of stigma. Equality for physical and mental health is the objective and it is the goal.

Budget 2020: Today. Tomorrow. Together. reflects our commitment to control spending and prioritize investments. We are focused on easing pressures on families, growing the economy and ensuring the health care system is equipped to respond to pressures from COVID-19. Close to \$100 million is available for pressures associated with COVID-19. This will allow our government to respond to demands for such things as personal protective equipment and testing.

Madam Speaker, small businesses are the glue that keeps rural Newfoundland and Labrador thriving. Our government understands the value of small businesses. We know that COVID-19 has had a huge impact on small businesses; therefore, \$30 million of COVID-19 Small Business Assistance Program was introduced in *Budget 2020*. It will be retroactive and it will help offset expenses incurred due to this pandemic.

In the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, we have businesses dating back to the 1800s, like John J. Gibbons Ltd. and we also have businesses like the Dildo brewery that are brand new and are thriving.

Madam Speaker, on October 16, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities announced approximately \$600,000 in funding to support community arenas and pools throughout this province. The funding is intended to assist municipalities, registered non-profits, private organizations or partnerships operating arenas and/or pools.

There are two arenas in my district. There's one in Placentia and there's one in Whitbourne. This \$10,000 grant is very welcomed. It is definitely needed. We, as a province, need to continue to invest in the health and the wellness of our citizens.

Just a couple of weeks ago the District of Placentia - St. Mary's was hit very hard by a storm; in actual fact, we were hit the hardest in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Five culverts had to be replaced between Colinet and North Harbour, another culvert had to be replaced between North Harbour and Branch and another one on the main road in Whitbourne. We had numerous washouts throughout the district. I had one resident in Freshwater who presently cannot go back into their home, there was such a significant washout underneath their home. We had a lot of people that were stranded in their homes as their driveways were washed out.

We do have aging infrastructure, Madam Speaker, we know we have aging infrastructure, but that is why we allocated funding in *Budget 2020* to deal with this infrastructure. *Budget 2020* allocates nearly \$116 million for communities to improve infrastructure and enhance services. This includes funding for such programs as the federal Gas Tax program, the Municipal Operating Grant program and the Special Assistance Grant program.

Water, clean water, good quality water is the second priority throughout the District of Placentia - St. Mary's and the Trinity South area. Residents of the Gaskiers, St. Bride's and Dunville have been struggling with poor quality water for years. They cannot wash their white clothes and when they fill their bathtubs, the water looks brown and muddy. So we have allocated almost \$10 million under the Municipal Capital Works program to support projects that prioritize water, waste water, disaster mitigation and regional collaboration. Communities in my district will be aiming to access these resources.

Madam Speaker, despite the ever-growing cost of Muskrat Falls – I believe \$12.7 billion is the last number we have – and the debt this project has put just over 500,000 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador in, we are working

toward meeting the needs of our seniors, our children and our residents of this great province; \$3.3 million has been allocated annually for the expanded Insulin Pump Program; \$500,000 has been allocated to support a new, modern radio telecommunications system for first responders; over \$200,000 for Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative to support 50-plus clubs and advance initiatives that promote social inclusion.

Madam Speaker, our efforts to support our resource sectors on land and at sea will provide strength and stability for rural communities during this period of uncertainty and beyond.

Madam Speaker, despite the debt we inherited in 2015, despite the \$12.7 billion price tag of Muskrat Falls, despite the debt of COVID-19 impacts, I am proud to represent the people of the District of Placentia - St. Mary's and I strongly believe that this is a good, solid, stable, strong budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Do we see any further speakers? No further speakers?

The Member for St. John's Centre.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Madam Speaker.

MR. J. DINN: Madam Speaker. I'll get that straight.

Madam Speaker, I represent the District of St. John's Centre, and unlike some other MHAs, like my colleague from Mount Pearl, I too can walk from one end to the other in maybe an hour or less, or less than an hour, but it's densely populated.

When it comes to campaigning, it's going up one step and down the other, and that's the way it is. Also, it has a number of green spaces, four schools. If you go around Ropewalk Lane you'll see, certainly, the various small businesses that exist there. You have middle-class homes and you also have poverty in my district. I deal with housing issues, precarious food insecurity,

precarious housing, inadequate housing – you name it.

I want to talk a little bit about, I guess, budget based decision-making and needs based decision-making. Last year – well, no, not last year. Almost two years ago in 2019 I learned the term of zero-based budgeting and about finding efficiencies. I'm going to focus on two aspects: schools and poverty.

Budgets have significant impact on schools. *Budget 2016*, the one that I remember when I was president of the Teachers' Association, was definitely budget based. It had and still has long-lasting effects on the school system, because we did see the introduction of combined grades. We saw basically the elimination of late French immersion as a result of this. We saw class size increase. We saw the reduction of administrative positions. That has had an impact on our schools.

Education is something that's important to me. As I've said here already, I taught for 32 years. I served as president of the Teachers' Association and served as a vice-president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, so I got to see it not only from my own district but also from across the country. For teachers it's about needs: the needs of their students. They pick up the slack.

I don't know if many of you have done *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* or Covey training. One of the things it talked about in that is you protect, you look after and you nurture the goose that lays the golden egg. You don't kill the goose that lays the golden egg; you nurture it. Because as long as it's alive and working well and doing well, it keeps producing golden eggs; it keeps making you rich. In the school system, it is the teacher who is that goose.

One of the reasons I fought so long and hard for teachers is to protect them; to give them the resources they needed to do the work in their school system. I can tell you they pick up the slack. Classrooms not being cleaned, I can tell you there are teachers who bought their own cleaning supplies to clean a classroom. That happens more than you think. A student without clothing or food, it's a teacher who's taking part in the school lunch program, the breakfast program, who's organizing it, who's buying

sometimes items for their students without anyone knowing it.

Walk into any kindergarten class, walk into any primary, any class, but especially the primary grades – and I know the minister across from me in his time as a Minister of Education probably had this experience too, walking into classrooms and seeing how decorated, the amount of care, the posters that were on the wall. I don't know what it's like now, but I can guarantee you that just about every one of those posters, the things that you see on the walls are things that teachers have paid for out of their own pocket.

My wife was a Grade 2 teacher. I dreaded August, because I knew there was a significant portion of the budget going into school supplies, into books, into whatever. My response as a high school teacher: this should come from the employer because this is all about making the learning experience that more accessible and interesting for kids.

I can tell you where they go, they fill in and they fill in the gaps, no two ways about it. We have heard here certainly with regard to COVID-19 that we're not hearing any issues. I've heard that phrase here a few times, that we're not hearing from the district, we're not hearing from the teachers, and the question is: Why would you?

I remember the executive director of the NLTA saying that an open door policy works only if the person has the temerity, or the kahunas as my colleague would say – if he's looking for another word for kahunas or whatever else, it's temerity – temerity to walk across that threshold and speak your piece.

You might remember Inside the Classroom in CBC that resulted in a particular Minister of Education saying that over my dead body – there wouldn't be any further cuts only over my dead body, which he promptly rescinded the next day. That grew out of the same attitude that we're not hearing from teachers. Well, you heard from teachers, and I'm willing to bet that if you were to have an Inside the Classroom right now, CBC were to have it again, you'd hear similar complaints and more so.

I can tell you that I am getting it from teachers. Why wouldn't they? I was president of the

Teachers' Association and had it; I've always had and still do have a good rapport with teachers. So I can tell you here that from teachers as a – by the way, school is a blank show. At my junior high we have now entered the I'm-not-wearing-a-mask-anymore and you-can't-make-me stage. Social distancing is a joke. That's from a teacher.

Recess and lunch are mass gatherings. Cohorts and mixed kids are starting to go back to old ways, getting closer. In the classroom, sharing food and supplies back and forth. All I can do is remind them and encourage them. Easier said than done with teenagers. Complete chaos all around. That's from a teacher in the system now, only a few weeks ago.

But there are others. Teachers are asking about public exams, when are they going to be cancelled? Here's another teacher: Starting right from the first day of professional learning for teachers the stage has been set. There were no concrete plans in place. The cleaning protocols for resources and desktops were unknown. Teachers were tasked to work together to create school-specific protocols, despite not being experts in the field in any regard. Administrators had more questions than answers. Cleaning before disinfecting while wearing gloves was emphasized. Gloves are not available for students who are expected to do the cleaning. There's no cleaning and then disinfecting happening. There's one spray bottle with a mixture of 1-500 bleach and water.

The Minister of Education said that there is a plan for a quick and smooth transition to level II or III, should we need it. That sounds great in theory; however, there's one major problem, teachers do not know what the plan entails. This game of wait and see is playing a huge cost on the mental health of students, families and staff. Do I feel safer in Walmart than in my school? You bet I do.

Thanksgiving is coming and we still do not have the Chromebooks that were publicly promised back in August. Do we have to wait until Remembrance Day? Christmas? What's the delay?

Busing: this has had a major impact on families for school opening. However, the

implementation of the new bus plan in September left many families in distress, putting added pressure on schools and the school's administration. While we understand that buses had to come in from out of province and given that we have been in a pandemic since March, why did the province wait so long to come up with a plan for busing? Why was this not considered during summer when we knew schools would eventually have to reopen under different guidelines as before.

Cleaning in schools: Again, I brought this one up in this system about the lack of cleaners. Due to the current protocols in place for the COVID-19, current daytime custodians are mandated to clean and sanitize doors, stairwells, rails, lockers, all high-touch surface areas and all washroom areas. Also responsible for cleaning sanitization stations in every class, cleaning and refilling of hand sanitizer bottles and paper dispensers, garbage removal and all classrooms and hallways on every floor. No wonder we're not hearing anything. People are too busy trying to make the protocols work.

I can tell you that we live in unprecedented times. We've heard that many times with regard to the school system, but we are not putting the resources that are needed. It's going to take more than a letter to all teachers saying what a great job they're doing. Teachers want the resources to make the system work to help them do their job. That's why I've been emphasizing since the get-go, the disparity between what we invest in keeping this Chamber safe for Members and how little we're putting into keeping our schools safe.

Madam Speaker, I'll move on to the next topic that I have and that has to do with poverty. It's another issue. I've been involved with Oxfam. I got involved with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul because while Oxfam is about social justice and changing the systems, people still have to eat. They still need a place to live.

The one thing about the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as a mandate or a guiding principle is that no act of charity is foreign to the society; it's more than just a food bank. That's another issue that's near and dear to my heart.

I'm sure you've all read *A Christmas Carol* or you've seen the various iterations of it.

AN HON. MEMBER: I like The Muppets.

MR. J. DINN: The Muppets, that's fair enough. However, what we should realize is that this is more than just a feel-good Christmas story. It was very much a response by Charles Dickens to the attitude at the time, the whole notion of social Darwinism.

You heard it expressed, if you listen to it or read it, by Scrooge: Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses? Because that's where people were sent who couldn't afford to pay their debts: workhouses or prisons, debtors' prisons, until they paid it off, or the whole notion of social Darwinism, which is the survival of the fittest. There are only so many places at the table and if you couldn't afford or you couldn't take care of yourself, you had two choices: die or shift off somewhere else, to the Americas. That was the whole rationale behind it that Charles Dickens was very much concerned with.

I will read into the record as well, then, a letter from the Minister of Immigration to Doug Pawson, this line: It is critical that the government and community work towards developing approaches to assist individuals in receipt of income support become self-reliant and independent and, as a result, more resilient to changes in financial circumstances.

That's a statement of privilege. I don't know how it helps. What does it mean to tell a person to become more self-reliant? I know what it will mean for food banks and not-for-profit organizations; it's going to result in a greater uptake and pressure on volunteers to try to meet the needs. It's going to mean more people going to The Gathering Place, more to the kitchens of New Hope down in my district. It's as simple as that. It's what it's going to result in. Many of the people that I've served do not have family supports. They're on their own.

Just a reminder here, just so we get a sense of it: According to Food Banks Canada – and that's a census that's taken every March, a snapshot in time, if you will – in Newfoundland – listen to this – of the people who use the food bank, almost 72 per cent of those using a food bank

received social assistance. What does that tell you right off the bat? They're not making enough to live, to put food on the table, which means that they're also falling behind in rent and – I can tell you that electric bills, that's what people are down to: living in the dark, living in the cold; deciding whether they take medication or not sometimes, or where their next meal is coming from.

Forty-one per cent of food bank users, actually between those who are renting in market value and those in social housing provided by government, you're looking at basically 86 per cent of the people at food banks are renting at market value or in social housing. What does that tell you?

Single- and two-parent families, 35.5 per cent of those are accessing food banks, but single people made up the largest group. They were 53 per cent of the people accessing food banks in this province.

We talk about investing in people, these are also people who may not afford to have their teeth taken care of; can't afford it sometimes and the other aspects. They are trapped. Some of them have mental health issues. They have addiction issues. I do believe this from talking to my colleagues, my school councillors, underlying every addiction issue – it's not a choice. Underlying every addiction issue there's a mental health issue. Addiction is a way of dealing with it, of living with the issue, as simple as that.

Basic income amounts in this province for a single person is \$11,724 a year. That's it; plus, I guess, the drug program. For a couple, \$14,000. When we then, as a province, decide to disqualify people from income support because they applied for CERB, we are not in any way, shape or form teaching them to be self-reliant, independent or more resilient. We're beating them down further, exasperating any mental health issues they have and putting pressure on the other groups within society to try and pick up the pieces.

I think it was in James, the New Testament, if you have – not me, but in the Bible. If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food and one of you says to them: Go in peace,

be warmed and filled. Without giving them things needed for the body, what good is that?

It's time to stop thinking in terms of budget-based regulations. We can make exemptions for everything else. It's about looking after the people who are most vulnerable. These are not necessarily the people who are going to be voting for us in any election, but they are the people who are in greatest need.

I can tell you that in my district, along with my constituency assistant and my colleague for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi the same thing, the needs are going to be such that we're going to be swamped with calls. It's not good enough, because the poorest of the poor are still citizens of this province and still deserve to be treated with dignity. I ask here, if there's one ask at the end of this, to invest in our education system to get the teachers what they need and, for God's sake, make sure that the most vulnerable of our province are looked after – put food on their table.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I welcome this opportunity to speak to Members on both sides of this hon. House as we lend our views, of course, on what was certainly a much anticipated budget. I think it's fair to say that many in this province waited with bated breath for this year's budget. After all, like the rest of the world, we were hit hard both socially and economically by COVID-19.

Of course, that ongoing pandemic has left many, especially those working in the service sector, with no jobs to go back to. When people don't work they suffer. When people don't work the provincial coffer suffers. We were already hit hard by a downturn in the oil and gas industry,

Madam Speaker. COVID-19 made challenging situations even more difficult; however, I think we can agree that as a province we did it right and continue to do it right when it comes to COVID-19.

It is no accident that we have weathered this terrible scourge better than most other jurisdictions. Although unpleasant to have to do, by regulating our activities we are well ahead of other jurisdictions in battling this pandemic. We had fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who were lost to this disease and countless family members and friends left to grieve.

At this point, we have more than 270 of our fellow citizens suffer through this terrible disease and some suffering for a longer period of time. Not a pleasant situation at all, Madam Speaker. Yet, when we look at other parts of the country, and certainly when we look at our neighbours to the south, we can be proud of the work we have done in battling COVID-19. We can be proud of the work of our medical teams for leading the way for the past six months, Madam Speaker.

We have been doing what must be done and, unfortunately, that meant hurt for some sectors of society. It meant the closures of restaurants, the closures of bars, fitness centres, hair salons, child care centres and libraries. With closures come layoffs. Thank goodness, because of our patience and the health team's conviction to do the right thing, we are at a place where partial reopenings are happening with appropriate precautions in place, of course. That's now possible.

We will continue to be responsible, and although this pandemic could be with us for some time yet, we will persevere. Perseverance is the hallmark of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and as *Budget 2020* shows, not only will we persevere, we will progress, Madam Speaker. We aren't satisfied with the status quo to weather this pandemic storm; we will double down to ensure the progress of the past five years continues. Ours is a province with an exciting future awaiting it. Since becoming a Member of this hon. House, I have been very proud to be a part of a team determined to move this province towards the bright and exciting future that we have.

The budget that we were presented with recently was not one born of timidity and a fear to dream of better things. Instead, it was a blueprint, not just to get us through COVID-19, but it was for a time when we are all well beyond the pandemic, Madam Speaker.

As a former minister for the Status of Women, I was certainly pleased to see an introduction of affordable child care. This has been a long-standing wish of many of the women's groups in the province. I'm sure many women and, indeed, men are relieved to see this become a reality.

Affordable child care will allow more parents into the workplace, especially women who, let's face it, have predominantly been the ones left home to care for the children. Now opportunities that were not available will be open to them. Being in the workplace is about more than just being a wage earner; it is also about the feeling of self-worth and self-esteem that many garner from being employed.

Not to suggest for one minute that those who stay at home and raise families are of any less value, Madam Speaker. My own mother raised six children, and I admire her and others like her for what they do and have done. There is no denying that having a job, helping bring home the bacon, as they say, can be very fulfilling.

Child care is more than just a positive for parents. It also provides children with a stimulating environment, mixing with other children, exposing them to many experiences that will enhance their learning and development as they prepare to transition to formal schooling. Combine that with full-day kindergarten, as introduced by this Liberal government five years ago, Madam Speaker, and the future does indeed look bright for those young girls and boys.

There was some trepidation about going the route of full-day kindergarten back then, though I dare say you would be hard pressed now to find any significant number of people, whether teachers or parents or others, who would now go back to the old system. I think, Madam Speaker, that people generally are pleased with full-day kindergarten.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that going forward we should expect the unexpected.

When we were forced into closing down our school system in early spring, we realized the need for enhanced digital learning in Newfoundland and Labrador. With another \$22 million allocated to further enhance digital learning, we are demonstrating our resolve to rethink the way our girls and boys and, indeed, our young women and men are educated.

The traditional classroom can no longer be seen as the sole venue for teaching and learning. Things can be done outside the classroom as well. When the necessity rises that classroom might very well be the student's bedroom or the student's living room, Madam Speaker.

This summer saw many post-secondary students without the traditional jobs that were normally available to them. COVID-19 affected all of us. Some availed of programs generated to cope with the pandemic, but many are still concerned about the cost of starting or returning to a post-secondary institution. Whether they be students at Memorial University or one of the CNA campuses across the province, one measure of relief they can expect is stable tuition cost, Madam Speaker. As part of *Budget 2020*, we have committed to keep tuition fees at their present level. This is certainly good news to those investing in their future by furthering their education.

On top of this, a sum being set aside for employment and training programs is another indication of our government's commitment to help individuals move ahead to reach their goals. I am pleased that we will continue to partner with the federal government to ensure under-represented groups, notably women and youth, will be aided in their quest to achieve meaningful employment.

I'm especially pleased to see further initiatives being brought forward to further interest of women. I applaud the Premier and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women for their plan to develop a Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity. This is great news, Madam Speaker, I'm very proud of this. This is a wonderful undertaking and will bring together all political parties, Indigenous leaders and numerous other stakeholders and interested persons from across this province.

There is over \$3 million allocated for various groups, tasked with aiding women in this province. During my time as minister, I had the opportunity to visit most of the groups and I can assure you this province is blessed with an abundance of intelligent, committed, impassioned women determined to advance and help women in this province. The allocated \$3 million, Madam Speaker, is money well spent.

During my first term as an MHA, I had the distinct pleasure of being parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health and Community Services. This opportunity gave me a whole new appreciation for the complexities of that department, Madam Speaker, and the professionals on many levels who are tasked with delivering health care to our people. It is an ever-evolving undertaking where we must always be abreast of the latest developments in the world of health and medicine to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians receive the latest and best care.

One initiative in this year's budget is one every one of us can probably relate to since, no doubt, all of us have someone in our lives afflicted with diabetes. I know my sister-in-law Lisa is one of those people and her insulin pump is a godsend to her. I was so pleased to see that we are spending \$1.7 million on expanding the Insulin Pump Program with \$3.3 million earmarked for next year, Madam Speaker.

Just like education, COVID-19 has given us a heightened awareness of the place virtual care can play in our health care system. Over \$3 million is being invested in this service in this budget. This can serve as a tremendous aid when dealing with mental health and addictions, for example.

Health care requires a significant portion of our yearly expenditures and we have to ensure our system is as efficient as possible while delivering good service to our citizens. Our Premier has committed to having the Department of Health and Community Services form a task force with the ultimate goal of developing a 10-year health accord. I commend the Premier for this. It's excellent, Madam Speaker.

How can you talk about health in 2020 without mentioning COVID-19, again, Madam Speaker? In the new budget, approximately \$100 million is being earmarked for personal protective equipment, testing and to undertake an immunization program, if a safe and effective vaccine should become available.

Of course, services such as education and health care are not possible without a healthy revenue stream to support them. It is imperative that we do our part to enable industry that is responsible and beneficial for our province, Madam Speaker.

Though there is a lull in the oil and gas sector right now, our government is determined to ensure the industry within our province remains competitive. The accelerated exploration initiative will provide companies with the incentives to continue exploring our offshore for new finds of oil.

Within the last couple of weeks, we have seen how working co-operatively with the federal government can pay dividends for us; \$320 million that was announced will help build the industry. I'm sure the work done by this task force will prove to be very beneficial, Madam Speaker.

Of course, ultimately and in due time, green energy will replace other forms of energy and we have to ensure we are in a position to be at the forefront of delivering this energy, not just for ourselves but to our neighbours as well. Whether it's hydroelectric, wind or whatever other method of generation can be imagined and/or developed, we have to be at the ready.

It's just not energy that we are showing great potential. Most would be very surprised to learn that the technology sector contributes more than \$1.4 billion to the economy. Recently, we announced a joint measure with the federal government for a Business Tech Solutions Program; \$2.7 million will be used to assist businesses with purchasing digital solutions to build their business.

As a government, we have overseen several departments adopt technology for the deliverance of services, and this is bound to increase moving forward. Before leaving my

home in Fortune in the wintertime to drive to St. John's, I am always sure to check and to use the 511 app to check our road conditions, Madam Speaker.

Of course, coming from the Burin Peninsula and being the daughter of a fisherman, the fishing industry is especially dear to me. As a government, we will always give this priority. Although some would say the face of the fishery is changing, that is not entirely accurate – or that is my belief. It is not changing as much as it is expanding. There will always be those who participate in the traditional fishery. We must – we must – support our fisherpersons; however, there is no denying that other fisheries are finding their niche in our province as well.

In my District of Burin - Grand Bank, you'll find a lucrative surf clam operation ongoing in Grand Bank. While in St. Lawrence, sea cucumbers are all the rage. That's a species, of course, that was very seldom heard of not so long ago. Right now in Marystown, the second of three large buildings associated with the new hatchery being built for Grieg NL is almost complete.

Aquaculture has come to the Burin Peninsula, Madam Speaker, and I am sure it will prove to be a lucrative business for many, many years to come. As a government, we have committed to helping fish plant processors and aquaculture operators to expand their product lines and to seek out new markets. We will be availing of the \$9-million Atlantic Fisheries Fund to carry this out, Madam Speaker.

Another important industry in my part of the province, in my district, is mining. The fluorspar mine in St. Lawrence has been operating for the past couple of years with many more years of production ahead of it, but it's not just the minerals that we are presently utilizing that our government is focusing on. We want to build that industry, so we are allocating \$1.7 million for mineral exploration. That is another example of how our government is proactive and not just waiting for things to fall on our doorstep.

An industry that is often under-represented, but is near and dear to me, is tourism. I come from a part of the province with much tourism potential. A drive through the diverse areas of

the Burin Peninsula will introduce you to almost every sort of terrain and absolutely spectacular scenery.

Over the past few years we have seen an upturn in the tourism industry with new facilities, attractions and places of interest being highlighted in many of our communities. Of course, the industry was left reeling this year because of the lack of out-of-province tourists due to this pandemic, until someone came up with the fantastic idea of staycation. It helped save what would have been a disastrous year for many entrepreneurs, Madam Speaker. Our government saw fit to help with financial assistance to eligible tourism and hospitality operators. Additionally, almost \$13 million is being spent on marketing.

Related to tourism is the arts sector. This sector was hit hard by COVID-19, as we all know, with many venues unable to operate this past summer. I know in my district, particularly with Lighthouse Productions that operates out of Grand Bank, they have done incredibly well over the years, Madam Speaker, but this year this could not happen.

I am pleased that our government has developed a Small Business Assistance Program valued at \$30 million and aimed to help small businesses and community organizations cope with the challenges posed by this pandemic. In the budget, we also saw an additional \$1 million going towards ArtsNL and \$4 million to assist the film and television industry, Madam Speaker. People might be surprised to learn hundreds of people were employed in that field last year.

Madam Speaker, I see my time is winding down, but I have so much to say toward this budget, so I'm going to continue. Although our province is labelled The Rock, in reality we have many areas that are very suited for agriculture. We are taking the idea of food self-sufficiency very seriously. It has been shown that we can grow a variety of crops and our government is making more Crown lands available for farming. To do this and carry out a variety of other initiatives, the government is earmarking over \$12 million for agriculture programs. As well, we are setting aside \$9 million to support the forest industry.

Ultimately, the aim of this government is to build a Newfoundland and Labrador we can all be proud of, a Newfoundland and Labrador where we are all given the opportunity to be all we can be. Madam Speaker, as I've said, I have so much more I could say to this budget but my time is winding down. I look forward to my next opportunity to speak.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to speak again in the House of Assembly, particularly as we relate it to the '20-'21 budget, this unique year that we're all facing. We've had some good dialogue and some good discussion around the budget process itself. It's extremely unique in comparison, for anybody who watches the House of Assembly over the last number of years, in the timing of a budget, coming late in the fall versus early spring. The impact it's having on the economy itself and the lives of people changes the approach to what we're doing.

It's a bit more stressful, I think, on the staff in the line departments who are having to prepare it because they're looking at numbers that are really floating well off the charts of where they normally would have been from what was projected only six, seven, eight months ago in making sure that there were adequate supports and financing to provide the services that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are entitled to and deserve and, more particularly, need.

Madam Speaker, this is my 37th budget. As a former civil servant, I followed the budget process very closely because it was directly connected to my responsibilities in government and the impact that it would have on the programs that I was responsible for. I've seen some unique programs and services be put forward. I've seen some major cuts that had major impacts on people's lives. I've had some programs that I thought were extremely beneficial totally wiped out. Then, we've had

other ones put in play that were a bit questionable as to what impact or what benefit they would be for people.

That's the budget process. Line departments through, in normal processes, consultation that normally finds its way up through the ranks within the bureaucracy to the minister's level, which in turn then through the Treasury Board and then Executive Council until a decision is made on what are the most appropriate ways to spend the monies that are here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It fluctuates.

I can remember my first budget that I was engaged in was \$2.94 billion. We're in the \$8-billion range now, which seems to be the threshold or the stable for the last number of years that we've been working in that. That becomes relevant to particular needs of the people or the expectations. It also becomes relevant to the age of our infrastructure and things that need to be replaced. It also has an impact based on the fact that technology changes and we have to ensure that we can offer the same types of programs and services to our citizens in Newfoundland and Labrador as they would be offered anywhere else in this great country of ours or anywhere else in the world.

Sometimes that becomes a challenge based on your limited income or changes in your income or particular strains on your budget lines or, in some cases, the fact that you hadn't anticipated a major expenditure that now has to be addressed. That happens from time to time, probably more often than people would know but it does have a major impact on how you deal with your budget and what types of programs and services you're going to offer to the people of our province.

This is my 10th budget as an elected official. This week, 10 years ago, I put my name forward to, hopefully, represent the people of my district in the House of Assembly. Fortunate enough, they agreed that I would probably, at least for the first election, be a good representative. Four elections later, I guess they still believe that I have potential to serve them in the right manner, but we've seen some very unique things over the last number of years, the last 10 budgets.

We've had some devastating ones that crushed the peoples' hope at times and took away a lot of

their livelihood and a lot of the potential things that they wanted to do. We've had some that put a lot of hope back into people when it came to programs and services for those who are disadvantaged or for those who had particular challenges, particularly for those other leaders, our municipal leaders who needed supports in their infrastructure budgets in their own communities to ensure that things were offered to the people of their own communities.

There's been a unique process here, but people need to realize, at the end of the day, no matter what side of the House you sit on, we all have a responsibility to be accountable for the monies we spend and, hopefully, do as much due diligence as possible to make sure that the return on the investment is in the best interest of the people of our province. That's what we would venture to do at any given time.

In this House we may discuss and disagree, we may even banter back and forth of whether or not we agree with a particular program or policy or we may disagree with the actual amounts of monies being allocated to a particular program, but, at the end of the day, you would hope it's done based on either the needs that's been identified, the emergencies that come to be front and centre, or the lobbying done by particular special interest groups that show that they can justify particular investments. Particularly when we do program review, from time to time, you identify that a program that was good and served its purpose has now outlived its usefulness and needs to be replaced with something else that's more effective. There's a whole process that goes through the budget process.

Contrary to what people think, politicians just don't say there's \$8 billion here and here's how we're going to allocate it, just based on that. There's a whole set of protocols that start the day after this budget is adopted. There will be a process for the next budget where the civil service and the agencies and boards that are directly connected and fall under the responsibility of government must find their way to be accountable and to generate the revenue that's necessary to cover off their expenditures. So there's a unique set-up that we have here in our process.

What we do ask the general public, no matter what side of the House you sit on, is to understand that we can't be everything to everybody. That's the unfortunate thing. There are so many things that I think everybody in this House would love to do for their constituents, would love to do for particular groups that they have a connection to, that would love to do for special things that would make Newfoundland and Labrador unique and give people options that they normally wouldn't have. Unfortunately, we're at a point now in our history where, financially, we have some real struggles.

No doubt COVID has added to that for us in Newfoundland and Labrador and to everybody in this country and around the world, but we were having some struggles prior to this. Our economies, particularly when they're mineral based, fluctuate so much that we have no control over where they go. Once we base a lot of our revenue and our necessity around what we generate from that, then it becomes very volatile and you are playing a teeter-totter game. It's up one day and it's down the next. It's unfortunate, but it's a reality.

People have talked about this over the decades – and no matter what administration has been in – diversifying the economy. I think we've done that. I think every administration tries to find a way to diversify. Sometimes diversification is not just bringing in something that didn't exist before. It's modifying something that exists so that it's either more attractive or more engaging or brings in more revenues that are necessary or finds another way to eliminate some of the other big expenditures that may have been drawn down on your budget line.

So there has been a multitude of things that have happened. The mainstay of Newfoundland and Labrador – and I won't go back 400 and 500 years because I call them around the settlement days, while you were drawing people from Europe and wherever else to come here – I'm talking in the last 100 years, since we've been into what we would consider a classical system where it's around the process of the international markets and that has an input into what you're doing. So the last 100 or 125 years have been more into that mainstay where the commodities we have in this province would be watched by

those in the United States or in Europe or in the rest of Canada to see what volume of business would be worth being done here and what that would mean to our economy and what that would mean to the investments in infrastructure as part of that.

We've seen it coming. Our mainstay was the fishing industry and it made us who we are. It made us an actual province and a settled area. We've managed to find ways to diversify that, particularly in the collapse. We've managed to make sure that other industries within that industry could flourish. They may not have been at the same level as the cod fishery was for years and years where it was the mainstay and everything else, the secondary species and that sometimes weren't even worth catching because you didn't have a buyer for them or it took too much time out of your schedule where you could make money of the cod and you had a readily available market.

Since then, through technology, through our own innovation from our fisher people, to the industry and the companies themselves, we've found unique ways to diversify that based on the principle of bringing in new species and opening up our markets. Now, we've gone to unique places from the Philippines, to places in remote parts of China where they do have a need for particular species that we have in our waters here.

We have diversified. We continue to diversify. Diversify is not only saying here's something totally different that we've never done before. One person said to me one time that we should have diversified years ago, when I was a civil servant, and we should be making CANDU reactors. Why should they be made in Montreal, in Toronto and these places? I said, well that's not necessarily diversification if somebody else is doing it. It's just competition.

Diversification is finding a skill set or a resource that you have and utilizing that to the best of your ability or changing the existing resource to maximize the return, particularly around employment. That's what we're talking, employment and the ability to generate revenue that would then obviously be the mainstay of what you're trying to do would be that you have some stability in your economy so that if one

sector drops, the other sectors can offset it for a period time. So it's minimal of an impact from a financial point of view, particularly in communities where we have some remote challenges so that people don't leave them because the one industry there has faltered and there's no other option. So you play around with some of those things.

People forget our mining industry has been around 155 years in this province, right now, as a major contributor. The forest industry and the pulp and paper, while may be a little bit of struggle there now, for 75 years was a massive supporter of employment. At one point, I think, it was 16 per cent of our revenue being generated from the pulp and paper industry and the spinoff jobs that were there.

We've had some issues there where certain things sometimes industry changes, time changes what's going to be acceptable or necessary in our society and you have to be able to maneuver that around. I know what's been trying to happen in Corner Brook, they've been trying to be as creative as possible to make sure they're still competitive in the world market. The world has changed, pulp and paper is a whole different necessity with technology and that. So how do you diversify that there's still a need and you find your niche in the world market, while at the same time being cognizant of the changing environment.

Our mineral industry has changed dramatically. Now we have our own Inco – what we've built from our own secondary processing. We've always been critical of ourselves, and rightfully so, that we lost opportunities for real financial stability and sustainability when it came to employment by not doing secondary processing. We used to miss the boat a lot when it was too easy just to get the raw product to move it on and we were happy with the jobs and that. Having a little bit more hindsight to look at the long-term benefits by doing secondary processing; having smelting plants here.

I grew up on Bell Island, which was the largest submarine iron ore mine in the world. Everything was shipped out of Newfoundland and Labrador – everything. So everything that was built in Germany for 15 years, most of Europe after World War II, came out of Bell

Island and then Buchans; yet, no secondary processing. We could've made steel girders, we could've made all kinds of other things that would've been needed for the rebuild after the conflict we had, but there wasn't a will here. It was too easy to go the other route instead of saying here's what we need to do to diversify.

I give credit, the last 25 years or so there have been some changes around what happens here. We saw that particularly in some of our other industries that were trying to produce here. We saw it in the aquaculture, in refurbishing what is part of the fishing industry, but in a new set of approaches to it and looking at some of the other secondary processing that goes around that. Particularly, not only the secondary from the raw material, it's the preparation, building our own cages, building some of the technological electronic things that are necessary from the feeders and these types of things being developed here in Newfoundland and Labrador and mass produced here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So we've come a long way. There's still a long way to go because there are so many things that we could be doing. The innovation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the skill set, is second to none. We need to get to a point where at the end of the day we stand up for jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador, not only creating the jobs here but creating an environment where the technology is so advanced that it can be exported somewhere else. The days that we have to be an import society in employment should be long gone. We need to be a little bit more creative through our supports for those who have the ability to put that in play.

I know over the years there have been some creative things. What we're doing in the IT industry here has been second to none. The aerospace industry is its own new industry that's starting to take off. These are things that would be beneficial in the long run. We have younger people. We may have less of them, but they're more worldly; they're more open to the use of technology and they need to be given a way to be more engaged so that at the end of the day their entrepreneurship dictates that we can collectively move some of our industries to the next level in a more competitive way and we can

diversify certain things that we want to do in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We see what happens in Labrador, the mass potential that's up there from everything from the mineral development to the clean energy, to even some of the other things. We were big at one point in military training and all that. I think we sort of let that go by the wayside, but that's an industry in itself. It's an industry here. At one point I think there were 9,000 service people in Newfoundland and Labrador. Imagine the hundreds of millions of dollars in those days, what that meant to our economy.

Everybody will talk about what the influx of American dollars and the influx of European dollars and the influx of Canadian dollars at the time meant to our sustainability and the infrastructure at the time. You know what? We still have that ability; we still have that infrastructure. We still have some unique geographic attractions that could be used for diversifying and providing a service.

People still need to be trained in levels of the military. They still need to be trained in levels of search and rescue. With our terrain, the particular areas that we have – and it could be anywhere from Twillingate to Bell Island to Nain to Lab West – there are all kinds of integral terrains and training potential in those areas, from all kinds of specialized things.

One of the things people wouldn't have thought about 30 years ago, even 25 years ago, was tourism. The tourism we had was expats who came home to visit their family or, unfortunately, had to come home because there was an illness in the family and that. Now it's total strangers who two months ago didn't know where Newfoundland and Labrador was. Now when they come and they're so enthused about it, they become our best ambassadors.

People have come home here, as you know, to Newfoundland and Labrador and now buy homes, who could never pronounce one of the names in Newfoundland and Labrador at the time because of our dialects and our spelling and all that, but now love it as if it's their home, and retire here. That's a testament to how we've promoted ourselves. It's a testament to what we offer people; what a clean, safe environment you

come to. You know what? Even what we would think sometimes as we complain about our weather and fog, to other people that's attractive. It depends on how you deal with it.

We have a lot of things going for us in Newfoundland and Labrador. Unfortunately, this has been a unique year. I could concentrate on what's in the budget and what's not in the budget, but we know this was a budget around trying to maintain a sense of stability as we went through in an unstable time. It's not a time where I'm going to point blame that things could've been done and should've been done.

In Estimates, we've asked some questions to the Minister of Health and got some clarification. We know we have some challenges in the health care system. We know it would take billions to correct it if we just threw money at it. We know there are creative, innovative ways of providing good service at a minimal cost while still ensuring that we don't segregate one part of the province from another from having access to certain things.

There's an old cliché that a colleague of mine says: In troubled times, in hard times, we need to get back to finding out how we give people what they need versus what they want. Human nature is we're all going to want the best we can get; we're all going to want what our neighbours have.

Do you know what? We have a responsibility in this House and as elected officials to give people what they need. Those needs are to make sure they're safe, they're healthy and they're engaged. That they have employment and that they feel good about where they are because they know the next generation will be well educated and have access to things that probably didn't exist in their day, but now they're not going to be immune from being able to actually have some better things in our society. We challenge the government over here a lot. I would think and hope nobody in this House doesn't agree that we need to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly those who rely on our industries for employment.

We have some challenges in the oil and gas industry. They're not unique to Newfoundland

and Labrador and I accept that, outside of the challenges we'll have, but we need to find ways to protect our industries here. If it's the forestry, if it's the pulp and paper, if it's the fishery, if it's the aquaculture, if it's the oil and gas industry, if it's the IT industry, if it's the aerospace industry: whatever it is, we have a responsibility to find the best mechanism to ensure that those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the ones who reap the benefits from that. First through employment, then through the tax revenue that's generated and then hopefully through other opportunities that the next generation will get to also be part of.

Mr. Speaker, on that, I would say we're facing challenging times. It's even a unique debate on a budget, but I think it's one that needs to be had to ensure that we're all in this House to do one thing. That's to ensure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get through COVID and that next year hopefully it's a bit brighter for the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to get an opportunity to speak to the budget, but I have to say, my colleague across the way, that's going to be a tough act to follow. I thought he did a really good job over there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: I say that with all sincerity. There certainly wasn't any sarcasm intended.

I'm going to try my best to concentrate on a few different things, one being the new department of which I'm a part. Obviously, I try to speak about my district a little and just a few other things to sort of tie it all together as we debate this budget.

I think my colleague across the way mentioned that he did about 37 budgets. I can say I haven't reached that point yet, but I believe this may be

my ninth budget sitting in this House. They're always interesting, no matter if they're during a normal year or this 2020 year. They're always interesting, they're always important and I think they're a good opportunity to look at how we stand as a province and where we are.

The first thing I would say, and I don't think I've had an opportunity, I give credit to my colleague, the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, for doing an amazing job stepping into this. When you think about the timelines, coming in in August and then having a budget. Again, there's been a lot of work done. I congratulate my colleague. I also thank the previous minister of Finance who was there when COVID started off. Really, it's been a great team effort and I thank them both.

I thank the staff because I don't think people truly, outside of this building, understand the hours that the civil servants in Finance put into this process, as well as everybody else. Even getting ready for an Estimates briefing is a long time-consuming process for everybody in every department. There's a lot of pressure. I appreciate the work that they've done.

Now, since August 19, I've had an opportunity to be a part of the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology. I can remember when the Premier called me to let me know. It did take me a couple of shots to remember the name. Whenever you go to something different there's sometimes a feeling of: Wow, this is going to be different from something you've done for the past five years. I can say with all honesty that no matter the challenges that present themselves with a department of this nature, especially those that have been compounded and exacerbated by a world that, frankly, you never know what's going to hit you the next day, it's an absolutely thrilling department to be a part of because you realize the sheer importance that the aspects of the department mean to our province and to our well-being.

The fact that we've taken what was already, obviously, a very important part, that being natural resources, and then combine something that I think has perhaps some of the greatest potential for our province, and that being technology and the tech sector, which is the underpinning and can be the underpinning of

everything that we do. I'll get an opportunity to sort of mesh that together.

I just made a few small notes here, Mr. Speaker, just different things that I've seen and been a part of. One of them is just last week I met with the Prospectors Association; I met with Mining NL and we talked about the mining sector. Again, I've had various colleagues in this House that all like to compete for their districts and talking about how important it is for my colleagues from Labrador, all of them talk about mining in Labrador, and then I have a colleague over in Springdale who talks about the importance of Springdale as it relates to gold. The good news is they're all right. Every part of it is important, every part of it.

We all realize –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Sorry, I missed the Minister of Health, who, yes, also talks about mining as well – sorry, Minister of Health.

I will get a chance to talk about Central because Labrador, we realize the importance of Labrador and like everybody else they felt the impacts of COVID going into care and control, but the way these companies were able to readjust to protect their workers but to come back on stream has been absolutely amazing. These aren't small things, small industry, small companies.

When you combine the sectors – and I have to tell you, I haven't had one person question the Premier's choice for putting the departments together. Just today, we take something like a traditional industry of mining and today we found just about \$750,000 that we invested in Iron Ore Company for an R & D project. The fact is, even traditional industries can use new technology to help make them more efficient, to make their businesses run smoother, to help protect when it comes to workplace health and safety, you name it, they can feel it. That was just a really great announcement that the Premier made today and it's an example of combining traditional with the new.

Mr. Speaker, I think we are going to take some leaps and bounds as it relates to the tech sector and how it applies.

Speaking again of mining, just what's going on in this province with gold right now is extremely exciting. We are one of the hot spots in the country and in the world when it comes to gold.

Again, I'm going to give a shout out now to *allNewfoundlandLabrador* who I've quoted in the past, but every day they put out business news, usually 11:30 at night they put out their new headlines and just about every day there's some kind of positive story about things going on in the mining industry; investors and prospectors, people coming together, trades happening. It's really amazing to watch.

That being said, I'm going to move on, 14 minutes is not a lot of time to finish off all the different things I want to hit.

When it comes to the oil industry, do you know what? Absolutely, it's been a tough time. Every morning I'm reading different articles about the pressures we face, but I take solace in a couple of things. One, we, as a province, have been through that before and we know that we have to weather a storm. In this case, it's a double-edged sword or storm in that we have COVID and we have an industry in turmoil. But I have faith in the team that we have brought together to help us find solutions to the problems that we face.

Most people I have talked to fully recognize, when they realize the provincial government, they say you don't control the price of oil. It's very difficult for you guys to write just cheques. They get the fact that we are trying our best and we are coming up with innovative solutions. One of those, which we just announced, was the exploration incentive. It was something that had been talked about by other people, I certainly can't take credit for the idea but I was there to help implement it. It's about taking the security bid deposits, putting it back towards exploration and trying to spur investment by these companies.

I'm happy today to see that CNOOC and Stena announced that there will be some drilling going on in 2021, which is a positive for the industry. In fact, as we've talked to CNOOC and others about this exploration incentive, like anything, we hope that there's more to announce in the future, but it's just one of the things we are trying to do.

I will come back to that. Again, I don't want to spend too, too much time on it because the reality is that the greater portion of Question Period every day is discussing this very issue. I want to discuss some of the other bright things that are also out there that maybe don't get discussed as much.

I just talked about the tech side. Just this morning, I met with Memorial University; I met with Dr. Timmons. We talked about what we can do as a province and what they can do as a post-secondary institution to help prepare us for the biggest challenge that faces us with tech. The biggest challenge is also one of our greatest opportunities. We need people for the jobs, the thousands of jobs that will be created. We need skilled people to do that.

That's where our post-secondary institutions come into play. They need to be able to adapt and be agile as well and be ready to take people, those that are educated and those that are just leaving high school going into post-secondary. We have to make people realize these are not just small unsustainable jobs; these are well-paid skilled jobs that are sustainable.

I'll sort of segue. Today is the kickoff to Innovation Week, which is led by NATI, which I mentioned in the House earlier. They're now known as techNL. When you just listen to the optimism that they put out there and talk about the possibilities and the opportunities that exist here in this province for our young people – and it doesn't even have to be young people, anybody can fit into this agenda that we have, which is growing the tech industry, but we need those people.

I met with MUN and talked about it, then I met with Eastern Health; I met with Mr. Diamond and Mr. Johnson. They talked about the different things that they're doing that Eastern Health doesn't often get recognized enough for what they're doing on the innovation side. They just went into the number of different proposals they're working on, a number of different groups they're working with and each one of them involves job creation.

There are jobs being created, whether we're talking about PolyUnity, whether we're talking about – there's another company, I think it's

Granville, we're going to recognize tomorrow. There are tons of these groups that are in health tech that are innovative, educated here, trained here, living here and they've been helping us through COVID. Now we're going to take that and export it to the rest of the world. It's really uplifting, because the reality is that 2020 has had its share of difficult news. So I think that we must grasp on to the positive when we can and where we can and let people know that there is hope and there is opportunity.

Later on this week we're going to transition from Innovation Week to Small Business Week. Small business being the backbone of this province. NATI, this group – we've worked with NATI to put I think it was \$2.7 million into helping 170 small businesses transition, realizing now that we have to take what we had and we have to put them online, because I don't think a market of half a million people in this province is the limit. I think we need to take what we have here and ensure that it's available everywhere else. That's one of the things that NATI will help do, but it's about these partnerships, it's about leveraging.

I'll get a chance to talk about a different one that we're going to discuss now shortly, which is sort of outside the department but it does involve an aspect of the department, which is co-operatives. Last week was Co-operatives Week. I spend a lot of time singing proclamations, Mr. Speaker.

Last week we met with Ken Kavanagh of the Co-operatives Week and we talked about the different things, whether it's credit unions, St. John's Farmers' Market – and I hate to say one, because you know that you're missing so many, but that's sort of what I'm going to transition back to. It ties into one of the big, flagged announcements of our budget, that being \$25 a day child care, and one of the opportunities we have there which ties in the things that we need to concentrate on: Partnerships, cooperatives, co-operation, working together. It all ties in in this example.

Now that was just the two meetings I had this morning when we talk about some of the innovation here. Tomorrow we have a panel discussion. There really is a lot of amazing stuff here. I thought I might have a small idea by reading the news, but being in the chair, getting

an opportunity to meet with these companies, to talk to them, whether it's Genoa or, again, hoping to soon be able to visit Verafin. I mean, they're looking for people. It's absolutely amazing these success stories that we have here. SubC out in Clarendville; SubC is another success story here. Young people trained here doing world-class operations.

Now, seeing as my time's getting down, I'm going to transition to the district. One of the big things – I'll talk about one thing with the district, and it ties into the \$25 a day child care. A few years ago it was recognized that we had a serious need in our district, in the community of Port aux Basques when it came to child care. There are a lot of different ways you can approach it, but this one was, I guess, a partnership and it's a co-operative. This is where I think our successes will come from.

It was a co-operative between the Leading Edge Credit Union, Department of Education, the Federation of Co-operatives, ACOA, the Town of Port aux Basques itself, as well as a corporate partner, Marine Atlantic came on board. Everybody invested in some way, shape or form, whether that's a cash investment. In the town's case, they had the donation of property. The long and short of it is we now have 37 children enrolled in daycare there. We have 10 full-time positions. We have a wait-list, sadly, waiting to get in. This just shows the example of where we need to be.

Coming back to the minister's announcement, this is absolutely fantastic news. We're trying our best to eliminate some of the barriers that are there. This is one of those success stories and I'd like to see this replicated. I think it can be replicated elsewhere in the province, because we are going to need to create more spaces. That, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is a good thing.

On that note, again, I go from all the different positives in the department that I talked about. I always do take the opportunity to listen to every speaker in the House, to listen to what they have to say. I noticed some contrasts here today.

I mentioned the Opposition House Leader earlier. I listened to him and it was truly a positive speech. Allowed to oppose, allowed to criticize, allowed to pick apart things, but did so

in a very reasonable, logical manner. Again, he shouldn't get used to this because usually I like to take a poke at him, but it was reasoned. It was not fear mongering. I just thought it was in tone with realizing the times we find ourselves in.

Then when you go back to Question Period today, and I listened to the gentleman that sits next to him. We all face this oil industry problem that we have, but instead of having the reasoned questions, ones that I've come to expect from the Member for CBS, the Member for Terra Nova, where they've had good – again, the Member for Placentia today asking about Come By Chance – good questions, hard questions, but trying to get to the point.

The two points that are there today: one was talking about hush money from the federal government. How is that in any way helpful to the situation we find ourselves in? How is that in any way helpful?

The second part we talk about is putting it out there that these workers will be without work until after the winter. Again, there's been nobody, I can guarantee you, on this side of the House that said anything like that. They are under enough stress and enough pressure as it is. They realize we're trying to do what we can. They realize everybody – there's nobody that doesn't want the same goal here, but what I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, is that we need a little more of column A, which is the Opposition House Leader asking good tough questions and a little less of column B, which is putting out information that is only there to create a fear that is political in nature. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it's absolutely not helpful.

I've had Members on the other side, I've had members of the public, who have reached out to me, privately or in emails or in phone calls, with suggestions, thoughts, questions, queries. I try my best to respond to them and to look into them.

I haven't had a single solution, suggestion, anything put to me by the Leader of the PCs – nothing. Not a single thing except to ask questions. Again, when you're using terms like hush money. My goal is I'd like to see that \$320 million of taxpayers' funds go to the workers of these companies in some way, shape or form.

That is what I want to see. I think that's what everybody wants to see. I'd like to see it sooner rather than later, but I don't think we need to put additional burden on these people. That's just the reality of it.

I go to my friend in the back, I think it's Topsail - Paradise. He was bringing up some of the points about some of the issues we face and we talk about going back in the past. I think I heard mention of the 2016 budget. Sometimes it's not just about going back in the past, it's about providing context. Context is required to understand the situation that you find yourself in.

Some of the pressures or constraints that are placed on us in not allowing us to develop the response that we want to, the fixes that we want to. One of the things that were brought up is rate mitigation. Now, I would say to anybody that happens to be listening here right now: Why do you think we need rate mitigation? Why do you think that we need it? The fact is we're getting criticized about rate mitigation, and I always use the comparison: It's like somebody makes a mess and then says you're holding the mop wrong. You're cleaning up the mess wrong. There's no sense to that.

What I will say, the same with the oil industry task force, we have a lot of good people, public servants, private individuals, they're all working together to bring some kind of solution to the issues that we face. Whether it be with rate mitigation and the possible rate shock that comes with Muskrat Falls – and I will remind the public that the capital we expend in Muskrat Falls places serious harm on our ability to do certain things now. That is the reality of it.

The other thing is we have an oil task force made up of – and I used the example, they're like the 76 Canadians of the oil industry in Newfoundland and Labrador; 21 people – and I tell you, I know some and some I don't know; they were brought together by people of the community. They are experts; they know what they're talking about. Whether it's procurement, whether it's supply chain, whether it's labour, whether it's exploration, you name it, these people know it.

What we are going to do is we are going to work with these experts to find a way forward through this. I look forward to what they have to say. I'll always welcome a contribution from my colleagues across the way but, in doing so, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, as I close – I don't need to remind all the Members on the other side, I need to remind the Leader of the PCs, sometimes you need to make a suggestion rather than just spread fear. That would be more helpful to the process we find ourselves in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before we adjourn for the day, just a reminder to those that Estimates for CSSD and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are at 6 this evening here in the Chamber. As well, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning the conclusion of Estimates for the Department of Education will be from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. The conclusion of the Estimates for Immigration, Skills and Labour will be from 11 a.m. until noon.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

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