



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLIX

FIRST SESSION

Number 58A

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

Tuesday

October 27, 2020
(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Are the House Leaders ready?

Third Party House Leader ready?

The independents ready?

Order, please!

The Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1.

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: All rise.

The message from Her Honour:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 March 2021, by way of further Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of section 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____

Judy Foote, PC, ONL
Lieutenant-Governor

The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the message be referred to a Committee of Supply.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering the resolution, the main Supply bill, Bill 42.

Resolution

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,559,733,200."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 42)

CLERK (Barnes): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, long title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 42 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Madam Chair, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$7,402,809,500 for the 2020-2021 fiscal year be carried and I further move that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total contained in the Estimates, the amount, for this fiscal year be carried and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount contained in the Estimates of Supply for the 2020-2021 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report that the Committee has adopted a certain resolution recommending that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the resolution be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: "That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,559,733,200."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the resolution be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,559,733,200.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a Supply bill, Bill 42, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service, Bill 42, the Supply bill, and that the bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. the Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce the Supply bill, Bill 42, and that the said bill now be read a first time?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, “An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service,” carried. (Bill 42)

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 42)

On motion, Bill 42 read a first time.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, that the Supply bill be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 42)

On motion, Bill 42 read a second time.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, that the Supply bill be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

The Government House Leader ready?

Is the Opposition House Leader ready?

Is the Third Party ready?

Are the independents ready?

All those in favour?

CLERK: Mr. Furey, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Haggie, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Davis, Mr. Bennett, Ms. Coady, Mr. Loveless, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Warr, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Haley, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Wakeham, Mr. Lester, Mr. Petten, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Parrott, Mr. Pardy, Ms. Conway Ottenheimer, Mr. Tibbs, Mr. O'Driscoll, Ms. Coffin, Mr. James Dinn, Mr. Brown, Mr. Lane.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 33; the nays: zero.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, we revert to the bill.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 42)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and that its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 42)

We got ahead of ourselves there a bit. Back to the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, that the House resolve into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions and a bill relating to the raising of loans by the province, Bill 47.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Ways and Means.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Pardy): Order, please!

Firstly, it's an honour and a privilege to sit in this Chair and to chair this session this evening. I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: We are now debating An Act To Amend The Loan Act, 2020, Bill 47.

Resolution

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

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province, in addition to the sum of money already voted, a sum of money not exceeding \$1,000,000,000.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

I recognize the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and very happy to see you sitting in that Chair and overseeing these proceedings this evening. I’m glad to have you at the helm this evening.

The Loan Act is a regular piece of legislation. As Members know, we’ve just passed the budget. This is a piece of that budget and the requirements of borrowing. It gives government authority to borrow in any given year. Members will remember that we brought forward loan acts every year between 2014 and 2020, with the exception of 2017, when we had sufficient authority remaining from our 2016 bill.

In March, Members will remember the beginning of the pandemic when we introduced a Loan Act that provided borrowing authority for \$2 billion during the emergency session of the House of Assembly. To date, we’ve borrowed the full \$2 billion as we dealt with the financial pressures from COVID-19. Today, we’re bringing forward amendments to increase the borrowing authority from that bill to \$3 billion – an additional \$1 billion. This is the number that we identified on budget day. It was contained within the budget and I mentioned it in the Budget Speech.

This is actually \$200 million lower than we had projected in July, when the former minister of Finance brought forward the fiscal update, and I thank him for his efforts in bringing that

information forward and keeping us all informed. This is \$200 million lower than we had projected in July and that’s as a result of some increased revenues. We saw a small increase in oil and gas, in particular, but in revenues overall.

Now, I don’t want to minimize the amount that we’re borrowing, this is a significant amount of money. We recognize how high it is, it’s just that it’s not the highest we’ve ever had to borrow in this province, Mr. Chair. That distinction goes to a previous administration.

We had originally projected \$1.2 in borrowing in *Budget 2019*, but, of course, that was pre-pandemic and pre-COVID. We’ve had to borrow this year, due to COVID challenges, and, in recent years, to overcome really the growth that we inherited in terms of the spending requirements of government.

Now, this borrowing that is taking place will allow us to fund our responsive initiatives during the pandemic such as: the essential worker program that’s been discussed in this House, the Tourism and Hospitality Support, the small business COVID support and even funding for Chromebooks for schools, Mr. Chair, just to name a few.

Mr. Chair, I will say that we do have cash flow for the province. We’ll be borrowing this additional billion dollars in tranches right up until the end of the fiscal year. Normally, there are between \$200 million and \$300 million tranches and we’ll be watching the markets and really exercising Treasury management to ensure that we’re doing everything possible to keep our costs as low as possible.

I’m bringing it forward, I know that the Members of the House have supported the budget; therefore, they support this bill so I won’t belabour the point.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank the members of the Finance team and the members that monitor and do the borrowing and ensure we have effective Treasury management. We’ll make sure that we’re doing everything possible to keep the rates as low as possible to allow us to borrow effectively. I know that when I had meetings and discussions with the bond rating agencies, Mr.

Chair, they actually gave kudos to the Department of Finance for their ability to place funds effectively on the markets and recognize that we are very prudent and efficient at doing so.

I want to thank those officials – some of whom may be watching this evening – for their hard work and extra efforts, especially during COVID. I know that the Department of Finance has been very active and very challenged during the whole period and I want to recognize them for those efforts.

I'll pause there, Mr. Chair, to allow for other interventions or any questions that there may be, but understanding, of course, that there has been support for this already.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

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

I must say as well that I'm very pleased to see you as Chair, assisting us here tonight, and we're very, very pleased and honoured to see you where you are.

First of all, as the Minister of Finance has stated, we are in support of the budget. We also are, therefore, in support of this bill.

I'm just very pleased, Mr. Chair, to have this opportunity this evening to speak and thank, first of all, the people who have elected me to be here in this seat, the people of Harbour Main. I want to say that being an MHA is indeed a great honour. I consider it to be one of the highest honours I have ever had bestowed upon me.

I must say also that in addition to it being a great honour, it comes with great responsibility. That's something that in my short time as MHA, approximately 17 months, I can say that the significance of the role of MHA has really been brought home to me with respect to the district and the needs that exist in the district that I represent.

This evening I would like an opportunity to speak about several issues that impact the District of Harbour Main. We have some very significant concerns that arise on a day-to-day basis in our communities and in our towns. I'll see if I can get through as many as possible.

I would like to concentrate, first of all, on the first which is, of course, jobs. Specifically, the many, many constituents in the District of Harbour Main who are out of work; the tradespeople who were working in the district and the impact that this lack of work has had on them.

I also will speak about seniors; another very important issue and concern that are facing seniors, especially during this COVID pandemic. I have many cases of constituents who are low-income seniors who have reached out to me over the past number of weeks and I wish to relay some of the concerns that I've been hearing from our seniors.

As well, I am critic for the Status of Women. I think it's important to highlight some of the women's issues. In particular, issues that are facing women in relation to COVID and the pandemic. I think that's something I'll also speak about.

As well, of course, a big issue in Harbour Main District goes back to roads. I have raised this issue numerous times in the House since I have been elected, specifically regarding the deplorable conditions of the roads in the district. I do want to highlight and emphasize that as well. Brush cutting – as you are aware, I raised this petition earlier today and I will speak to that again as this is an important issue.

Finally, the issue of mental health. The mental health and wellness of our constituents in Harbour Main, especially in relation to COVID-19.

Mr. Chair, first of all, speaking about the tradespeople in my district, I think I need to first of all highlight the situation as it exists in the trades industry. Since the budget was brought down on September 30, there have been layoffs at Husky, at Suncor's Terra Nova, at the Come By Chance Refinery, Transocean, as well,

various other areas in the airlines, numerous engineering firms and small businesses.

Mr. Chair, when I look at what the impact of these job losses are for people who are in the District of Harbour Main – and not only for people in the District of Harbour Main but other areas that are impacted by the lack of jobs and the layoffs – we really cannot understate the importance of this. When I look at, for example, the Terra Nova FPSO, I am troubled to see the situation as it has unfolded with the FPSO.

When looking at that particular aspect of our oil industry, Mr. Chair, I would say that we need to have more of a plan of action as far as this area is concerned.

I look at Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who should be working on the maintenance and the refit of the Terra Nova FPSO. We have the tradespeople in our province, Mr. Chair, who are capable of doing much of the work, but what are they doing? They're sitting at home waiting for that call that never comes. I've had calls from so many of my constituents I have a book here. This book is filled with people in my district who have been reaching out and who have nowhere to go in terms of work.

One individual I spoke to just recently said he's been applying for jobs since April. The only response he gets is we've received your résumé but that's it. Mr. Chair, he doesn't know what he's going to do. Do you know what he says to me? That's the most stressful thing of all, beyond the fact that he doesn't have work and he doesn't know how he's going to pay the bills. The most stressful and worrisome thing for him is the unknown. It's the unknown, the day to day, getting up every morning and not knowing what's going to happen next.

He also said to me, Mr. Chair, he's getting no information from anyone. He feels forgotten and abandoned and he is stressed to the max. He doesn't understand why this is happening. He says we are so rich in resources here in our province. We have so much. How did we get here?

Now, when we listen to the government they'll say it's because of COVID. That's it. We all recognize that COVID is a factor. No one denies that. I agree and I recognize, as well as any

reasonable-minded person, that COVID is an important piece of this problem. It has affected the world; it has affected our world's economy. There is responsibility there but, Mr. Chair, it is not entirely – it cannot be blamed on COVID. All reasonable people know that. They see through that. When government says this is a global pandemic and it's global crisis, there's more to it than that and we all know that. We know that government cannot absolve themselves of responsibility.

I've been asked by the Minister of Energy in the past when I've raised questions on this in House: What's your plan? First of all, I'm not in government. We're not in government yet, but, for example, with the Terra Nova FPSO we believe in the people of this province and in the workers. We have the best workers. In terms of the tradespeople, we have the best workers in the world here in our province. There's no doubt about that. We all recognize that we do – both sides of the House. We have richness in our resources but our tradespeople are capable of doing this work. Our tradespeople should be the ones hired to do the work on the Terra Nova FPSO.

What should we do then? I would suggest that Suncor require to start this refit and find a way to make it happen, to find a way to make tradespeople happen. I am of the belief that where there is a will there is a way. We have to take leadership though. It requires strong and assertive advocacy. There can be no accepting defeat. We cannot. We have to believe in this; we have to believe in our people. That might all sound like very general and very lack of being concrete, I guess, but really it comes down to that, Mr. Chair.

In times of economic crisis – and we are in this crisis – it is important to tell the people that we're not just talking about dreams here. We have to tell them exactly how we plan to get them where we need to go, especially in this time of crisis. How we do this is with strong leadership. If it means we go to Ottawa and if it means we fight, we fight.

Yes, I'm all about collaboration. I am a consensus-building person, but there are times when we have to take a stand for the people that we represent, and this is one of them. Mr. Chair,

the issues with respect to tradespeople in our province are serious. We need to take this as a priority in terms of – task forces are great. I hear a lot about task forces, a lot about studies, but this is the time for action.

One other point I wanted to get to – and I see my ambitious list of things I wanted to talk to, but I will obviously get an opportunity again. I want to speak about Come By Chance. Come By Chance affects so many of our workers. We have the MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue and the MHA for Terra Nova. They represent two districts which are impacted by the devastating news of the refinery closure. My District of Harbour Main as well.

We have asked questions in the House and we continue to ask questions and to demand action on this issue. The Come By Chance Refinery is not only important though to us, to our three districts; it's important to the entire province. The refinery produces fuels like propane and jet fuel, which are used in this province. They are producing the fuel that Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro turns into electricity, which we all use. We know that this will impact all of us.

The workers at the refinery live in the District of Terra Nova, live in, for example, Clarenville. They live in many communities in Conception Bay and in the surrounding area. These workers shop in the communities; they eat in establishments, in the restaurants. They support our local economy. If this refinery closes permanently, the impacts will be felt throughout the entire province. Mr. Chair, those are very serious concerns that we see in the District of Harbour Main. I hear it a lot.

When we had the oil and gas rally outside Confederation Building – I'll close on this note – I spoke to two women: one who had lost her job on West White Rose and the other who was fearing that her job was in jeopardy. I could feel the concern, the worry. They were worried to death about their futures, whether they were going to have to leave the province. We have to have implemented community benefit agreements that can be non-negotiable; we have to as a first strong step. There are many other initiatives which we have to work on to arrive at some solutions and some answers for the people who are out there struggling with the unknown,

with the difficulties affecting them as far as mental health issues and the lack of supports that are there.

Mr. Chair, on that note I will close. I thank you very much for your attention and your consideration.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have the opportunity here to speak to this bill. Of course, this is a money bill so we'll be speaking in 10-minute intervals on anything we wish, so I have lots to talk about tonight. The first thing, Mr. Chair, I wanted to speak about – and the Minister of Finance did mention this, actually, when she spoke. She brought up the topic of the Essential Worker program. I'm glad she did because it kind of just set off a little bell. It wasn't something I had planned on talking about tonight. It was something I had absolutely planned on bringing up but it had kind of slipped my mind for a moment.

First of all, I just want to say that I certainly applaud the federal government, obviously, for providing the funds to assist essential workers. We know we have an Essential Worker program. It was funded by the feds but developed by the provincial governments. They had to submit a plan, I believe, to the federal government as to how they would spend the money. If it was approved by the federal government, then they could implement the program, which was supposed to be for essential workers.

I do understand there are some provinces, so I'm told, that actually recognized front-line health care workers and so on and nurses and things like that. I know there were some nurses here in this province, a couple I heard from, and other people in health care that were disappointed that they were right on the front lines and they felt that they should have benefited from this in recognition of these extraordinary times. But the provincial government decided, no, they're

going to put the money into front-line workers who would be considered low-income workers.

I certainly agree with them doing that, and that's not to say that health care workers and so on don't deserve our thanks and so on, because they absolutely do. But with a limited pot of money, based on, I guess, our population and so on, there's only so much money. It was decided to put it to people who would have worked in grocery stores and maybe home care workers and people that generally make minimum wage or low wages and to recognize them during this pandemic, the important role that they played, placing themselves at greater risk and their families at greater risk in providing essential services that we all needed during a pandemic.

So it was a good program and it is a good program, but one of the things that I learned – and I had heard from a number of people and employers – first of all, there had been some glitches, I believe, with the employer end because they ran into some problems with the software and so on. It was not compatible to a lot of computers that employers would have so I know there were problems there. To the government's credit, they did straighten that out as far as I know. That was a good thing, a positive thing. I commend the government for that.

I know there are also a number of employees who have fallen through the cracks in this program. I understand there has been a line drawn in the sand for every program. What the government said is if you make \$3,000 per month gross or less you qualify. Obviously, if you're someone who made more than that, particularly if you made just over that, you're going to be disappointed. There are going to be some people who made just under and just got in on time and they're going to be happy, obviously.

Wherever you draw the line there'll be winners and losers, but there are some problems with the program. The first problem, which came to my attention, was that there were a number of employers who did not apply for the program. The workers couldn't apply for this program; the employers had to apply for it on behalf of their employees.

Unfortunately, there were a number of employers in this province for whatever reason did not apply. Some might argue they were so busy trying to keep their own businesses afloat and everything else that it just sort of went over their heads, they didn't hear about it, didn't realize and so on. There could be some of that. I've been told by some people that they brought it to the attention of their employers and their employers basically didn't care and said I have more important things to do than worry about this. Too bad for you, basically, which is absolutely disgraceful in my mind that you would treat your employees that way, but apparently that has happened in some cases which is very, very disappointing.

To the government's credit, I did reach out to the department and the minister. To the minister's credit and the government's credit they have been working with these people and making sure they get paid on an individual basis. I've sent a number of my constituents that way through to the department where their employer didn't apply and they have worked with that person to ensure they receive the benefit. I thank the minister and the department for that. That's a good thing. It's a positive thing.

Where we still have issues that haven't been addressed, unfortunately, is that we have some employees – I'm going to give a couple of examples now. Maybe other Members have heard of this because you've heard from people in your own districts. I'm not sure, but I've certainly heard from a number.

I had a home care agency in my area who reached out and said: Paul, during the time when COVID-19 first came on, I had a number of home care workers who said I'm not going to work, either because they were immunocompromised, they had family members who were immunocompromised or perhaps they were just scared to death, like a lot of people were at first. Just afraid to go to work, afraid they were going to catch COVID and bring it home to their families and so on.

The problem is that the clients, many of them seniors and people with disabilities still needed care. What happened was in this case this particular employer said: What I did is I had some workers who weren't afraid and never had

any health issues. They wanted to go to work and were willing to go to work. I asked them: Can you do me a solid favour and work a few extra shifts because I have nobody to take care of Ms. Jones today because your co-worker is not coming into work?

Because that person, that worker, stepped up to the plate and worked a few hours overtime, even though their normal remuneration would clearly put them under that threshold of \$3,000 – because they worked a few extra hours to help their employer out of a bind, now they don't qualify. They were actually punished and got zero remuneration in this program because they stepped up to the plate to try to help their employer.

I had another family who reached out, and like a lot of families when COVID hit it impacted them financially. Her spouse had been laid off. They were going to apply for the CERB but they were waiting on that. Anyway, through the jigs and the reels, like a lot of people, they had financial issues. She went to her employer and she had a bunch of leave banked where she had worked in the past, say, over the last year. Maybe it was some banked leave.

She went and she said: Listen, can I cash in my leave as a one-time payment, like a one-time cheque so I can get a few extra dollars here, because I have no money and my husband is still up in arms. He got laid off; he's not working. We're applying for CERB and we're in financial trouble. The employer said, sure, no problem; paid them out their bit of leave, a one-time cheque. As a result of that, when they went to apply for the program: you're over the \$3,000 threshold; you don't qualify, even though under normal circumstances they would qualify based on their income.

This is a problem. We have a number of low-income essential workers who did step up to the plate, worked in these jobs when we needed them the most, had a program that was supposed to look after them, but because of circumstances like this, they've fallen through the cracks.

I don't think it's impossible to fix. I don't know why the government simply can't go back to the employer and say: If their normal salary puts them under that threshold, then one-time

payouts, in terms of cash outs or a bit of overtime or something, should not be included in the calculation. They should just look at what's the normal salary and pay them.

I know I brought this up to the department again since. They said: No, sorry we're not changing it. But I'm going to raise it here again. It's not too late. The minister is here, he's listening. I'm hoping that he's going to go back and revisit this so that we can look after the people.

These are exactly the type of people that the program was intended for. We should not have these situations where they're falling through the cracks on some of these technicalities, especially if they can be addressed and this one can be addressed. I ask the minister to please consider changing that for these essential workers.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the Chair. It's great to see you in the Chair.

I'm going to follow up on what the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands has been talking about. As he said, here we are discussing a billion-dollar expenditure for the province. We can get into that later, but I had a lot of calls also from essential workers. As one Member mentioned: It's federal funds but is administered by the province.

We understand there's a criteria, but I've been contacted by several people. I'm going to ask the minister if they can give this person a call later to see what can be done. I understand the criteria needs to be set out, but when we're discussing a billion-dollar spend here and some of the essential workers who put their health on the line for all of us across the province, who stood up for us, who went to work for us to make sure that we were fed, making sure that we were still staying healthy, working in the grocery stores, working in the hospitals and working in long-term care.

There are two cases that I want to bring up – I'm going to ask the minister later if they can get someone from the staff just to call him and see if there's any way to work around – one was \$10 over and the other one was \$20 over. That's what they were over on their gross salary.

I understand the criteria. I understand criteria, but when you get someone who is an essential worker who is out working and they may work an extra hour because someone couldn't make it in because they had to take care of their mother, take care of their father, something like that and you're \$10 over. We have to try to make some leeway. I understand. I know my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, said it great, we do have to have some kind of criteria, we have to have criteria and I understand that, but, hopefully, within that criteria there's flexibility.

I'm going to be asking the minister to call his person, who I've been dealing with, to look at this and see if there's anything that we can do because we all understand the work that the essential workers did.

Another group through all this was the volunteer firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, what they did in a lot of situations and unknowing times for us all. A lot of them kept up their duties and their volunteer work for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and for the people.

There are several cases that I had on the essential workers. I know that there was sometimes that we had to go back to the people, the workers themselves and say: Well, you have to get your employer to actually apply. In some cases, the employer never did apply. We eventually wrote the employer and said: Look, we're getting calls here. Here's how you apply. In many cases, they did apply. It took time to encourage them to send in the application but they did apply and people got their pay. There are others that missed the deadline that you work on to try to help out.

It is always that to and fro when you're the MHA. I'm sure we're not the only two here that was working on that for our constituents. I'm sure most people here were working on that in the House for their constituents. When you get

the essential employees say: Well, we never got no funds. Well, did your employer apply? Well, we don't know. You're caught in the middle. They don't want to go and upset their employer because they don't want to have ill feelings with the employer, but they feel that they were essential. The money is there and it's easy for them then to take the money and pass it on to the employees.

You get caught in the middle but it's worth it because those essential employees, a lot of them had the extra expenses themselves. For example, how many times did we hear in this House where people had to find other accommodations for their children? A lot of times the parents were home and they didn't need the extra accommodations, but a lot of those essential employees had to continue on with their normal life because they were deemed essential.

I'll repeat myself: I understand that we need criteria, but I also understand that we need a bit of flexibility. If you're talking about \$5,000 or \$6,000 over, I can understand it. To be fair, I want to make it quite clear that this is the first time that I'm bringing this up to the minister because I only got it earlier; this is the first time. I told the person I was coming in the House and I never had time to bring it up to the minister. I want to make that quite clear, that was never ever brought up to the minister, saying no to it.

What I will do is ask this person to write me an email with their phone number. I will pass it on to the minister and I will ask the minister to ask someone from her office to contact and then see what they can work out. This is by no means being critical of the program, by no means being critical of the minister. This is something that was brought to my attention that I have to be walking into this House now to speak about, and something that I said I would bring up and that I would ask the minister.

The essential program was a great program. It did help a lot of people because there were a lot of expenses and a lot of other needs that they needed through this pandemic. I'm sure there's not a person in this House of Assembly that wouldn't pay tribute to them all. I know a lot of them personally and I'm sure everybody here does. When we were staying home, a lot of them were out on the front lines making sure that

we're all staying safe. I just wanted to take my hat off to all of the essential workers in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm hoping that we can – the few issues that myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands have brought up here, that we can try to find some solution to. I know on several occasions when we sent information to the minister's office, we got a quick response and got a great response from the department working on the Essential Workers Support Program.

I just want to make that up front and thank the minister's office and the staff for that because on many occasions, as I mentioned earlier, we were caught in the middle of it trying to make sure the application is put in. We had a great response from the minister's office and together that all helped out a lot of employees. I know our way out in the Humber - Bay of Islands and the Corner Brook area that we solved a lot of issues for the essential employees. Again, what I'll do is I'm going to ask this person to write me an email with their phone number and I'll pass it on to the minister, or forward to the minister and ask the minister's office to contact them and hopefully we can work that out.

I'll just leave that there right now. I'll have another chance to speak on the actual billion dollars later. I just want to thank you for your indulgence. I, again, reiterate what I said earlier. This is not a concern that I had; this was brought to my attention because we have a great working relationship with the minister and the staff with the essential employee program throughout this whole pandemic. I have to recognize that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to be looking at you in the chair itself, as opposed to having you behind me.

I want to start out this evening, similar to a lot of my colleagues here in the House, by thanking the people of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port for giving me the honour and privilege to represent them here in the House. It's something

that I don't take for granted. I try to work hard every day to improve their lives and I think that's exactly what everybody else does too. I'm glad to be here.

Stephenville itself, of course, is the largest community in my district. It has a population of approximately 6,600, but it serves as a catchment area for about 25,000. It is a hub for the entire area. Long before it was Stephenville it used to be an Acadian village. It was actually settled by people from Nova Scotia who left poverty and strife in Nova Scotia to come and settle in the rich fishing grounds and farmlands that Western Newfoundland had to offer. That's what started the settlement as an Acadian village.

Of course, in 1941 the Americans got permission to basically get the rights to build an air force base in the area. That itself took off and everybody, I think, is quite familiar with the history there. Over the years, that infrastructure has been continued to be used and the people of the district still celebrate what they call the Friendly Invasion. Every summer they put off two weeks of activities and they set up the actual base where the original gate would have been between the town and the base. It's quite a good celebration and a lot of history there.

The Port au Port Peninsula itself was actually settled during the 16th and 17th centuries between French and Basque fishermen who used the West Coast of Newfoundland and the Port au Port Peninsula for seasonal fishing settlements. During and after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, France actually retained the right to use land on the West Coast of the Island. The area, of course, that became known as the French Shore and Port au Port Peninsula was at the centre of that. It wasn't until 1904 that France actually relinquished its right of use to the French Shore.

The Port au Port Peninsula itself represents perhaps the most varied ethnic and linguistic mix in the entire Island portion of the province, including Mi'kmaq families, with the highest proportion of French-speaking settlement on the Island, the French minority a mix of Mi'kmaq, Acadian, French and Basque. They've also had an influence on the area's culture and, indeed, the province. Newfoundland's own unique folk

music has somewhat been influenced by musicians from the Port au Port Peninsula, including the highly regarded Emile Benoit.

Our community and our district, though, do have its challenges. Earlier today, I was glad to hear the Minister of Transportation talk about infrastructure. As I said, Stephenville was able to benefit from a significant infrastructure investment left over by the Americans. But, of course, in recent years that has started to have its toll of wear and tear. It was built at a time when men and women could run up and down the stairs and young soldiers and stuff.

Unfortunately, now many of those buildings are lacking accessibility, including government's own Government Service Centre, which houses Motor Registration and the courthouse. It is, I suspect, the only courthouse in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that is not wheelchair accessible.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. WAKEHAM: The minister is correcting me. Okay, it is one of and it needs –

AN HON. MEMBER: Sadly.

MR. WAKEHAM: Sadly, yes, it does need to be replaced or moved or done something with. It is old infrastructure; it needs to be replaced.

We also have challenges, of course, with water. The minister mentions areas in his district where there were challenges with unfit water. I have places in my district that have no water and have to be carried by buckets. Local service districts –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. WAKEHAM: – yes, that are actually having to go and get water in buckets.

The good news is we have been talking about it and trying to find solutions with the local service districts. I'm hoping that when they apply for funding as a local service district that we'll find a way to help them to make sure that they're able to meet all the requirements to do it.

Of course, my favourite subject in the last number of weeks every time I present petitions

is on the community of Cold Brook, which still has a kilometre of road to be paved. I keep hearing all these big numbers thrown about roads and everybody talking about the roads. I'd settle for a couple of hundred thousand dollars right now to fix Cold Brook Road. I'm hoping that somewhere in some of the roadwork that's done, there will be some savings that might be able to be applied so we might be able to get it done this year. The equipment is in the area. It's still in the area, just so the minister knows. Hopefully, he'll get a chance to get out and get an opportunity to see it.

The other thing, though, I want to switch quickly to a more serious subject in some ways, and that is the financial situation in our province. I was doing some math and when I looked at it, three categories of expenditure chew up more than 100 per cent of our revenues. Once you factor in education, health and financial debt servicing, we exceed 100 per cent of our government revenues, which means that every other single department of government we have to borrow money for them to operate. That's partly what we're doing here today is borrowing more money.

This is not something new; it's been around for a while. I think just about every government that gets elected – I always used to joke when I was working in government departments that there must be a letter left over in the Premier's office that says to be opened upon election. The new premier would open up the letter and the first thing they would do is read it out, and it always said: It's worse than we thought. It seems like premier after premier after premier. I would hope we will get to the point that when a government is elected, that they'll be able to walk into the office and the new premier will be able to say: It's exactly what I thought. That's where we need to go, transparency and accountability when it comes to those things.

This government took over in 2015. They had a significant deficit problem. They recognized it, they started the work, which was their budget which increased the revenue side of the equation, but we never got to the expenditure side of the equation. As a result of that, we're here in 2020, we still have an expenditure problem, but it's obviously a lot more complicated now because we also have a

revenue problem. I believe the Estimates – and when we got the update back in July, I think oil revenues were down by over \$500 million, so we have a ways to go.

I'd like to see action. I'd like to see more things moving on it. I'm not a fan of more task force. I think we've had enough reviews. I think we just need to get on with it. I would have preferred to see some movement on that. Obviously, this particular budget is a difficult one to do that with, considering we really only had six months of the year for a budget because COVID hit us.

I would hope we will get an update and a plan moving forward and that we won't have to wait until after an election or any time sooner to find one. The next budget, I guess in April, we'll get an idea of where we're going but we – collectively, we – have a job to get ourselves back on track. I look forward to being part of that, but I intend to hold government accountable and to push to make sure things do get reviewed and that we focus both on revenue but also on expenditure and find a way to do both.

With that, I thank you, Mr. Chair, and I stand down.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

It's good to see you in the chair, and a former teacher who I know will keep things in order here. Congratulations.

I'm going to start with education, Mr. Chair. This has to do with the fact that in my family five of the children ended up in a teaching profession. My wife's a retired teacher, Grade 2. My daughter teaches primary at École des Grands-Vents. Many of my relatives were teachers. So I come, I guess, by teaching.

My parents weren't teachers. Dad worked on the railway; mom had a big enough job staying home looking after us. It was unpaid work, but education was always important. I always remember her saying, get an education, you don't want to be digging ditches for a living. It wasn't until, of course, I was putting down a

patio one time, digging seven inches down and I forget how many feet across, and I said, yes, now I know what she was talking about.

I just want to start off with, I guess, I'm passionate about teaching. I've lived it. I still think of myself as a teacher. I used to marvel at how my father, who worked in the railway, knew so many people across the province. I guess my children marvel at me, at how I know so many people, but when you've had a life of teaching and you're involved with your association and the Canadian Teachers' Federation, you start to know an awful lot of people. Then when you look at the number of students who pass through your classes, you can see the number of people you know and the lives you touch are enormous.

To me, I looked at everything in teaching and education. It's not an expenditure; it's an investment. It's an investment in the schools that exist now. It's an investment in the future. It's an investment in our young people who will be the generators of ideas and so on and so forth.

I will have to say this, Mr. Chair; I've always taken the concerns of teachers very seriously. I lived it. Which is why I always bristle when I hear anyone who's in a position of authority, whether it's a CEO of a school district or a minister of Education, telling me: We're not hearing anything, or I'm not hearing anything. Often until it's too late, and then there's a reaction versus when you could have been proactive.

I can think of an example that stands out, Holy Heart High School, way back in probably 2006. I don't know how many years I put in requests. At the end of the year, you had to fill out the forms of what work had to be done, work orders. I don't know how many years I used to put in about the fact there was a leak in the ceiling – I was on the top floor – that needed to be repaired. Year after year it got worse. Year after year, I would dutifully fill in the proper form, the summer works program form, and each year I would come back and it still wasn't done.

The ceilings at Holy Heart of course had asbestos. Now, of course, it was during exam week one January and I came up to my class and I walked into the classroom and the entire

ceiling had come down because of the excessive water. The water had come down through my classroom, down through the four floors and flooded the basement floor. The roof had not been fixed.

By that time, despite having let the district know countless times, I put the letter in that basically said right now, considering what's in this ceiling, I can't guarantee the safety of myself or any student in this classroom. That's when, interestingly enough, I walked up the next day and the room was sealed off. Other teachers were upset and there was a panic at this time that, all of sudden, the school was not only going to be closed for a week; it was going to be closed for the rest of the year. Lo and behold, there was such a flurry of activity and how we have to take care of that, but do you know what the main concern was? Let's not let this get out into the media. We have to control the message.

I can tell you that every teacher in that school was angry beyond belief because these were all issues that they had brought to the attention of the district. I can guarantee you that if I had spoken to the CEO: Well, I'm not hearing it. Because there's a natural tendency to suppress the information. We don't want that to get out. We're willing to share the good news and promote that but we really don't want to hear about the things that are going to cost us money. I'm thinking that if we had fixed that roof at the beginning, it would've saved a huge amount of money in the long run. It would have saved the system; it would've saved taxpayers.

Sometimes there are many reasons why people in charge are not hearing; sometimes they're just not listening. I often realized very early on in my career that there's a vast gap, a vast gulf between the official positions on things and the realities of my workplace. I'll be up again because I'm going to run out of time on this.

I will say this: I faced suspension as a teacher. I was newly on the executive of the NLTA and I faced suspension because I spoke to the issue of teacher concerns, the fact that teachers' concerns weren't being listened to by the district.

We invited members of the district into that meeting and their reaction wasn't, well, let's see if we can resolve that. Their reaction was to drag

me in, and the other teacher, and to chastise us and threaten us with being suspended without pay, during exam week, when they figured it wouldn't impact them much. That was the response. They hadn't heard it, but their first reaction wasn't to say: We need to resolve this. It was: How do we teach these guys a lesson and shut them up?

Needless to say, a week long with overwhelming support, the suspension was withdrawn, Mr. Chair, and life went back to normal, I guess, but there was a huge public outcry from teachers and the public itself. It was at that moment that I thought to myself: If I'm going to be speaking on the issues facing teachers, I'm going to be doing it from a position where the employer will not be able to touch me, where I will be able to speak, not only to my concerns but the concerns of every other teacher and give voice to those concerns.

I can tell you that when I became president that was the main thing I promised teachers, because here's the thing: The teaching conditions of teachers are the learning conditions of students. I've already talked a little bit here about the goose that lays the golden egg. You protect your asset. You nurture it. You do what you need to do to protect that asset so that it can keep on laying those golden eggs and keep on looking after the needs of the children. It can make sure that the outcomes are met, that the school runs along very well, that children are nurtured.

I can tell you that it's not in my nature to stop talking about and advocating for the resources our schools need because it's going to affect every part of our economy. The child that doesn't receive services is going to become a child that's going to depend on more services later on. The child that gets all the supports he or she needs is going to become a contributor to our economy, to our society and to our culture. That's what we're dealing with.

For the teacher, it's about how do they serve the children that they have in front of them. I can tell you for a teacher it's a very personal job. I enjoyed my 32 years in the classroom; wouldn't trade it for anything, but I can tell you it's going to need resources. When I get a chance again – Mr. Chair, I will be up again – I'm going to talk about the situation today.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair is pleased to recognize the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I find it fitting that I'm going to go after the Member for St. John's Centre as he was my teacher growing up. He was a fantastic teacher because he has passion. You can't teach passion like that. I'll just say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Chair, congratulations on your new seat. You look quite fitting up there, I must say.

I wanted to go back to something that was said earlier today by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's. By the way, the Member helped me out with something over COVID here. It was about 11:30 at night and she dug in and she helped me out and it was resolved the next morning. I don't know if I officially thanked her for that but I want to thank her for that.

She talked earlier on about doom and gloom and it's not all doom and gloom. Of course, it's not. For those people who are out there and getting their two-week paycheque and job security, it's absolutely fantastic. I'm sure job security in this day and age is huge. But when you look at people that are being displaced right now, who lost their job, who are on the verge of losing their job – the Leader of the NDP talked about the fire department getting two calls a day for suicide. That sounds like doom and gloom. Those people are going through some doom and gloom there.

People are getting their power cut now. No electricity in this day and age. They're getting it cut. That's doom and gloom. There's an old wives' tale, I don't know where it came from that you can't get your power cut during the winter. Yes, you certainly can. We hope not to see it this winter but I guarantee you you're going to see it.

People can't pay their mortgages, car payments. We talk about it every single day. I know it might sound redundant in here, but outside these walls where it's actually happening, they need that attention. They need it talked about in here every single day and we'll talk about it every single day until those people feel a little bit more security than they have right now.

Kids going to school hungry. There are kids going to school hungry. That's a problem that needs to be tackled and well before COVID, too. No child should go to school hungry ever and nor should they come home and be hungry as well.

Mental health illness is on the rise. It's skyrocketing, it truly is and if we don't get a handle on it now, I said it before and I'll say it again, it's going to claim way more lives than COVID-19 ever will. That's going to be a systemic problem that we better tackle here sooner than later.

The Member talked about it taking three or four years to get some legislation through, and I don't doubt that. I'm very new so I'm still learning this process about legislation and how long it takes to get through. I'm sure there are some great people working on it behind the scenes. I want to thank them. It's a testament to what they're doing.

But this piece of legislation, when it comes to locked-in pensions. We were told today that the only two rules we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador is, well, if you're close to death or if there's a small amount. Well, I'm sure it's easy to diagnose a cancer patient or ALS patient. It's not so easy to diagnose a mentally-ill patient that's on the verge of losing everything and will do whatever it takes to take care of his family.

Trust me, they are close to death and they should fall underneath that category right now, because they're out there and there are tons of them.

The other rule, of course, was if it's a small pension. Well, what is small? Five thousand, \$10,000, \$12,000? Why can't we make that the new normal that you can unlock? We're not asking for 100 per cent because we know that it could devastate a person later on, or their family. That's put away for their retirement; that's okay.

But right now is when they need it. It's just so absurd to me because it's their money. They don't need to wait five, 10, 25, 30 years. What's the sense of a retirement if you don't have a home to live in, if you lose your family, if you lose your vehicle, if you lose your mind nowadays? People are really, really stressed out there and they need some help now.

I make this pledge right now: I'll sit here 24 hours a day, seven days a week until we get that piece of legislation passed because I know how important it is to the people outside the walls of this House of Assembly. It's really important, guys.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: I call on the government to do the same. I know we banter back and forth on stuff; this is not one thing I'm looking to banter about. I'm sure you guys want the exact same thing. We need this. Whatever it takes for us to sit in here and get this legislation hashed out, I'm begging you, please do it because the people out there, they need it.

I have a guy up my way in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. He's 36 years old with a family. He's going to lose his house and he has over \$60,000 in a locked-in pension. He's going to lose his house.

When I knew I was running for politics and I came back home from Alberta, I took \$12,000 out of my own locked-in pension to run my campaign. They allowed me to do that. We can't find some common ground where we can allow people to save their homes, their livelihoods and their families? The time for action is now. This has nothing to do with politics but this needs to be done. I'm asking everybody here to jump on the same page and do whatever it takes to get it done. It's very important to a lot of people out there and I know it's important to myself.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. Most of them didn't know who I was and they believed in me because they knew that I would be a voice. I have been a voice and I've had the privilege, the absolute privilege, of representing those great people throughout that district. As we move forward, we need to make sure that we continue

to represent them as best we can. I know that I'll do that.

I also want to give a quick shout-out to everybody's spouse in here – wives, families. We signed on for this; they didn't, but they back us every single day. I just want to say thank you very much to my own wife, my two sons and everybody's wives or husbands or families out there. It's very important that we thank them and thank them for their support.

These locked-in pensions, I don't mean to belabour it, but we can't talk enough about it. I'm going to keep talking about it until there's action on it. Again, it's not 100 per cent of a locked-in pension these people are looking for; it's a mortgage payment. It's to put food on their table. I just hope that everybody jumps on with that.

There are a lot of seniors out there as well. I'm sure everybody has been to the grocery store here lately. The price of groceries is going up like you wouldn't believe. When you're on a fixed income and you're down to the dollar every single month at the end of the month with very little left, and the price of groceries is going up 5, 10, 15 per cent, my God, that's a lot for a senior or a lot for a person who doesn't have a lot coming in. I'm sure we need to pay attention to those people as well.

The outside workers that are still coming in Grand Falls-Windsor at the long-term health care centre – we heard it's 85 per cent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working 90, 95 per cent. That's fantastic. That's absolutely fantastic when there's tons of work we can let it go to some other people. I want to dispel a rumour for a second because we always hear about putting community benefits agreements for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, which I am 100 per cent on board with. Throughout my career I will push for that.

Everybody talks to me about you went away for a while; you went back and forth to Alberta. I didn't go back and forth to Alberta because I necessarily want to go to Alberta to work; I went there to fill a gap in their workforce. Trust me, when oil tanked and those rigs shut down, we were the first ones sent home because they have

a community benefits agreement, believe it or not. They truly do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: We were the first ones sent home. I wasn't there on my own volition because I wanted to necessarily go there. Don't get me wrong, Alberta is a beautiful place and I thank what it did for myself and my family and those many families out there who choose to live here in Newfoundland and Labrador. It would be so easy to stay up there but they didn't; they stayed home.

Anybody who talks about, well, you went away to work, sort of thing, we don't want to cut it off, there's nobody prays for a day like I do where we have to go outside this province to find workers. It's not today; it's not going to be tomorrow. We should have 100 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working on any project this government puts forth from here on out and that's a fact.

There are people out there that have no work. I have a guy in Grand Falls-Windsor who sits across the road from the long-term health care centre and watches plumbers from Quebec enter that site every day. He can't get a job there.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

MR. TIBBS: That is absolutely shameful, it is. That man, what he has to go through to watch that, it's like his own provincial government, his own province, has turned their back on him.

I'm here to say I'm not here to turn my back on anybody and I will help those people as best I can. Once I learn more about this and I get the resources, I guarantee you we're going to dig in real hard and we're going to do the best to put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. That's going to be my motto now and it's going to be my motto for the next 20 years. We will put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first.

That's all the time I need, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the new role, so far, so good. I'll try not to make this too painful for you.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to have a little chat about public-private partnerships. We are late to the game on public-private partnerships and seem to not be paying attention to many of the lessons learned from several other jurisdictions who have gone down that same road. Perhaps I can take the next nine and half minutes to start talking about them.

Public-private partnerships are not an unknown phenomena. In fact, for a very long time we've been using public-private partnerships but we've been using a slightly different format for those. Public-private partnerships can be set up in a design, build, finance and maintain structure. This is a relatively new undertaking. Previously we built schools, we built hospitals, we built long-term care facilities, a variety of public infrastructure with a design and build approach to public-private partnerships whereby we go out and engage a consultant who will design a building according to the specs provided by whatever entity is needed.

If it's a classroom, how many classes do you need? How large do they need to be? What kind of gymnasium is there? Do we need kitchen facilities? Are there rooms for the teachers? All very reasonable. Then, of course, once that structure has been designed, government then takes it upon themselves to offer tenders for contracts to build that facility and those contracts are paid out. Once the facility is built and the contractors have been paid, we, the public, own those structures. Then, of course, we will maintain them and continue to staff them and use them and repair them for the life of their existence.

What we have done recently is we have gone to a larger model, which is a design, build, finance and maintain. The finance and maintain part is a little more complex. I've heard several ministers and actually some public servants talk about some of the benefits associated with this.

The trick with the finance and maintain part is that we do not pay for these structures upfront. Instead we partner with a private entity and they will provide the financing to build this structure and then they will maintain that structure. All sounds well and good because that means that us, as the keepers of the public purse, do not see that debt show up in a lump sum on our balance books. Instead, what we see is a stream of payments year over year for the life of the contract.

Well, there are some inherent problems with this of course. When we talk about the finance part of it, there is no public corporation that can borrow at the low rates that a provincial or federal government could. In fact, because we are so large and we have so much revenue associated with us and because we have the ability to tax and to raise funds, we can borrow at some of the lowest rates there exist. However, someone seems to think that it's a good idea to instead ignore the rates at which we can borrow and instead go out to a private corporation who will borrow at a higher rate and then charge us, too, for doing it.

Somehow, right off the hop, logic does not dictate that this is a good idea. Not only then do we pay extra for the financing, which costs the private corporations extra; we then pay these individuals to maintain these facilities. Reasonable of course, but it all comes down to what kind of maintenance will they do. What will that structure look like once it's turned back over to us, as the keepers of the public purse and public infrastructure? And, of course, then who will they have to staff that?

Some of these details are worked out in length of the contracts, but by and large, most of these contracts are 30-year contracts, so by getting someone else to build and finance this structure, we then promise them a stream of income for 30 years into the future. That's almost inconceivable. That's like buying a house, but we're doing this with someone else's money and they're charging us extra to do that. Not only do these 30-year contracts commit us to a stream of payments; oftentimes, these 30-year contracts have escalation clauses in them, which essentially ties that stream of payments that we make to the cost of living. That's dependent on consumer price indexes, so if the price of oil

goes up and the price of food goes up and the price of providing everything goes up, then these folks are well insulated for any rise in potential costs of living.

Now, here's a little bit of incongruence, because, if you remember, the people who will be staffing these buildings are tied often to public sector contracts or, if they're lucky, if these facilities are being staffed by individuals who are no longer unionized, they have even less protections, but individuals who are working in these facilities often have contracts that are shorter term. So it's regular you will see a labour contract that is three years long. Sometimes you'll get a four-year long contract and sometimes those contracts will include – rarely will you see a cost of living, but you'll often see a 1 per cent increase and maybe a 1 per cent increase and then we'll have a number of years without any increases, which means that we fall below the cost of living.

The individuals who are working in these facilities, their purchasing power is being eroded over the 30 years that they're working there. At the same time, the people who put those facilities there are getting their guaranteed stream of income and a cost of living associated with that. It's wonderful if you are a corporation or a private entity that can afford to find the financing to do this but, of course, it is going to erode the individuals who are working and their purchasing power.

What we're doing in this very one, small instance of the bad associated with P3 contracts is we are creating a further and further division of income. The entities that own these private corporations are reaping enormous profits that are associated, that are also increasing with the cost of living. Someone who owns these, these shareholders, are getting richer and richer and richer, while the individuals who are working these facilities have their income and their purchasing power – which means the amount of stuff they can afford to buy with the paycheque that they get – is eroded and eroded and eroded.

What we've seen here in Newfoundland and Labrador over the last, I'm going to say, 10 years in particular – 20 years if you want to go outside of the last couple of booms that we've had – is a greater and greater division of income.

What we're seeing is the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. As we continue to use P3s, we are going to continue to exacerbate this division in our society, so our society is no longer equitable. It becomes divisive.

A fundamental rule of economics or a premise of economics says that the more even the distribution of income in a society, the more prosperous everybody becomes. As we start making decisions that start exacerbating this division in income and this division in welfare, we are exacerbating the divisions in our society. People are going to be less able to fend for themselves. People are going to be more dependent on the provision of public services. We are going to have more people knocking on our door saying: I need somewhere to live because, as we've seen, booms in our economy create huge increases in housing and leave a lot of individuals unable to afford affordable housing. We also see individuals who don't have dental care, we see people who have to go to food banks more and more often.

That very simple concept of P3 models is exacerbating a problem in our society that we have yet to deal with. There leaves a great deal to be desired. I haven't even started reading from the summary document of why P3s are bad, which I will, because it seems we're going to have a very long evening of it. That is one part of the rationale why we should not be using public-private partnerships to provide public infrastructure that the people whom we represent need to use.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's indeed a privilege tonight to get here again and to represent the District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in it. Mr. Chair, let me first start off by saying congratulations. You're a perfect fit for the Chair. I've watched you since you came here in the House of Assembly. You sit in the corner and you listen to every speaker in this House of Assembly.

There are not a lot of us who do that, but you're to be applauded. The people of Bonavista should know that your attention every day is noticeable in this House of Assembly. You do a fantastic job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: This is a time that I really enjoy; the 10-minute speech is a whole lot easier than the 20-minute speech. We may get an opportunity to do this several times. I've been in the House of Assembly where we went eight hours. One night I had to go every third time to do it. It's a great time to be able to speak. You can speak about anything; that's just par for the course.

First of all, I'm going to start off tonight with the first part of the speech. I wrote a couple of things down. I'm going to say some thank yous. I am going to thank Dr. Fitzgerald and her whole staff for everything they've done for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: We're very lucky to be living in a province like Newfoundland and Labrador where we can feel safe. I know that this pandemic, nobody knew where it was going or where it was going to be. We saw what happened at the funeral home with a cluster and we were all scared that was going to spread.

The Committee, which was led by the Minister of Health, along with our former premier, Premier Ball and the representatives from our party and the Third Party – I commend you all. I thank you on behalf of all the people in my district for the fantastic job that you've done. Whether we'll question about testing or question whatever – but we all, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, have to appreciate the hard work that people have done to keep us safe.

I know as my family – and I'm sure as everybody else's family – we were all concerned about what's happening here. We look at other jurisdictions in Canada; we look at jurisdictions in the United States. As a matter of fact, we look all over the world. I was listening to BBC the other night and I was watching what was happening in Wales and how they just shut

everything down right away because people are not abiding by the rules.

I want to say a big thank you to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador also, because we've done a very, very good job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: You get the opportunity to see how it works. I watch the local stores in my district and I go into Foodland or go down to Wilkinson's or one of these stores, and everybody is abiding by it. You watch people line up and we know – listen, we're not going to get 100 per cent, no, but the majority of people in Newfoundland and Labrador understand and respect. That's what it comes to, it comes to respect for your fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We all have different concerns. I'll have a concern when it comes to washing my hands and doing what I have to do. I know there are people in my district who won't leave their houses because of the fear of this. I respect it, and I respect everybody that handles this the way they do. We've done very good as a province. We have to continue to do good as a province. We really have to concentrate and make sure that – we are getting cases.

I know Dr. Fitzgerald has said it's going to come here, but we have to isolate. If we isolate and we go to a restaurant these days, they'll take your name; they'll take your phone number. If somebody is in that restaurant, they can go back and do some contact tracing and make sure that any person was in contact. Those people, whoever is doing this job, I really appreciate it. I know I haven't seen behind the scenes but, again, I really have to applaud what people in this province are doing from the Department of Health to Dr. Fitzgerald's group and all our citizens. I just wrote it down, make sure you say thank you.

I want to touch on a group of people that we as politicians – and I know myself, I've been here for a long while. It is a group that I always said I would concentrate on, and that's our seniors. I've probably eaten more chicken dinners than anyone can shake a stick at because of going to different functions with seniors, whether it's the

United Church in Pouch Cove or it could be the Anglican Church in Torbay or the 50-plus club over in Outer Cove. It's a time that I really enjoy because you really get out to be able to mingle with seniors.

I can only imagine, because they're in a group that probably has the most – they're most susceptible to this disease, to the coronavirus. They're living in fear and they don't have the opportunity to go to the dinners or go to even bingos. I know you'd have a bingo in one of the halls down to the Lions Club in Pouch Cove. You'd go down to the bingo and the majority of the people there were seniors because it was a night out.

I think if we can do anything – I know personally myself, if I see it's a 50th anniversary or a 90th birthday, I'll make a little phone call. That's all we can do right now, but we should be doing that stuff. To your neighbours, if you have a neighbour that's next door to you and you can drop them off a fed of fish or drop them off a few vegetables or whatever it is, just something so they can communicate and stay the way they want to be, because our seniors are the heart and soul of Newfoundland and Labrador. They've done so much for us. They've paved the way so we can live the lives that we live.

I just want to make sure our seniors know that we're here for you. If you need to reach out and there are some needs you have there, please call and we'll do whatever we can. I know the local groups in the area, I've spoken to the two Lions Clubs that are in my district, and they continue to do a lot of great work for people in the district. I know we can't do the chicken dinners and we can't do what's on the go but it's good to be able to communicate. Pick up the phone and make a phone call. I know they would really appreciate it.

Mr. Chair, I always say there are two groups, the young and the old. I listened to the Member for St. John's Centre and he's very passionate about teaching and teachers and everything else, but I'm passionate about our students. I really am.

I got a phone call this weekend with a big concern, and I know he'll appreciate this, of how important the cap and gown ceremony is to students. Because when you have the cap and

gown ceremony, it's an opportunity for them to be recognized for their hard work, whether it's honours, whether it's doing some kind of program that is recognized that night. I go to them all the time, and I'm always amazed with the amount of awards that are won. It could be an award for a person who wants to get in to some kind of an apprentice program, whether it's electrical or auto body or something like that, but there are awards all night long.

When you watch a student go up across the stage, they worked hard for what they've done and the pride that's in them. Then you look and, guaranteed, you can see Mom and Dad there, and probably Nan and Pop, and they're just as proud. I've worked with the high school down in my area and I know they're working on something this year for the students, but I really want to emphasize that we really have to take care of our students. They've had a hard year. Students have had a real hard year. I know we talk a lot about teachers and we talk a lot about the resources, but we have to talk, too, about our students because our students have gone through a very hard year.

We had Snowmageddon. We had the worry of all the school time that was missed during that time. We know teachers have to do a lot of work to prepare for exams and whatnot, but students have to do a lot of work, too, to prepare for exams, to prepare for everything that's in school. They've gone through a very, very hard time. Again, I applaud our whole education system. We were starting off this school year with a lot of things that were unsure. We weren't sure of the busing and everything else. I've spoken to the minister several times with busing issues in my area.

We're talking students; we're talking kindergarteners, Grade 1s, Grade 2s and Grade 3s. How do they handle this? How do they not play with their friend? How do they not rub up against one another? How do they stay away from each other? They're only kids. They've done a fantastic job. Then, it goes back to the teachers and the parents that have taught them. I have two little grandchildren, I see them going off with their little face mask on all the time. It amazes me that they've adapted, but children will adapt. They will adapt to that.

Again, I think we're lucky to be living in the province we're living in. I think this House of Assembly, while sometimes we go back and forth at each other, we all have to work together. We all have to be pulling on the same oar. We all have to be in this for the people of the province, because I believe we live in the best province in Canada and I think we live in the best country in the world. That's Canada. And I live in the best district in the province, mind you. Anyway, I won't argue with you there.

I really believe it's a time that this province needs everybody pulling together and ensure that our residents are treated the way they deserve to be treated. I just want to thank them all for what they're doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the Chair. As others have said earlier, you look like you belong there.

Mr. Chair, Benjamin Franklin said: By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. I want to talk a few minutes about the Barents and what I see as a lack of a plan. To be quite honest, I've said several times, I think there's a lack of a plan with regard to our offshore oil and gas.

The Barents is currently just outside of here, demobilizing. The fine men and women that have devoted their lives to working on the Barents and some who've sacrificed jobs in other parts of the world in order to be home or closer to home – because make no mistake about it, when they're out on the ocean they're not at home – are going to lose their jobs. They currently sit in Bay Bulls with the arduous task of getting this vessel ready to sail it back to Norway. Some of these men and women are going to go back to Norway with the ship, but Norway has a policy where people from Newfoundland aren't allowed to work there. So they will very quickly be turned around, sent home and quarantined for a few weeks. They will resume their lives back here in this province with no work.

Last week there was an article that came out about the Pelles A-71, so that's our next drilling expedition. It's not 71 wells, as somebody pointed out to me; it's well A-71. It's one well. That's the future of our offshore right now. I'll say it again in case somebody didn't hear me: one well. This is what people have gotten excited about: one. So as for *Advance 2030*, if we double our production by 2030 we'll have two wells. That's pretty good.

CNOOC is coming here and not scheduled to come here until next June. So sometime between now and June the Stena Forth will spend some time in South America and she will go to Israel. She will drill some holes over there and then she will come to Newfoundland.

Here's what concerns me. As of November 1, when the Barents departs Newfoundland, Newfoundland will be left without a drill rig. I'll say that again: Newfoundland will be left without a drill rig. Government would argue that the parking lot out in Bull Arm – that is in Bull Arm, probably, because there are too many campers at Walmart, but anyhow, that's a different story – can look after our offshore if there's an emergency. Anybody who works in the offshore will tell you that is simply not the case.

Even when the Stena Forth comes here, she is a deep-sea rig built for fine weather, kind of like a fair-weather pilot that only flies when the sun is shining. The Stena Forth can only drill in good conditions. That's why she is not coming until next June. She doesn't drill in the winter.

If we are to come to a situation where we need to get a well capped or a work over or any of the things associated with the offshore that happens on an emergency basis, we're not able to do that. To me, Mr. Chair, that shows the biggest lack of planning that this government has displayed in the last few months.

We will now be producing offshore oil and gas, we will have lots of wells out there that things can go wrong with and we will not have the ability to go out and fix them if something goes wrong. That's a very scary, scary proposition. I would think in the last five years with *Advance 2030*, with the C-NLOPB and all the regulatory boards, we would all understand the importance

of keeping equipment here and having a plan going forward. I think there are a lot of people in the industry that are concerned about this.

The reality of it is, for there to be a big hoopla about one well being drilled in the next 12 months it's pretty bleak. It's very bleak, actually. The men and women on board the Barents, on board the West White Rose, the Terra Nova, the people that worked on the Henry Goodrich, the people at the refinery, all of these people who've lost their jobs all understand the importance of our ability to retrieve oil from the ocean's floor.

Mr. Chair, the theme that I have seen in the last 15 months, outside of COVID, was the lack of a plan. Lots of people would think there was a plan. I don't think the hopes and dreams, all the platitudes and the turning of stones was a plan. I think it was specifically that, it was hopes and dreams. Now, when COVID has come along, we're left to pick up the pieces.

As I've said before and I'll keep saying, mid-March when the letter went to Ottawa saying that we were in deep trouble, that wasn't because of COVID. Now we have a budget where there's a huge deficit, which I would say would be huger if we didn't get a Visa from Ottawa, I guess, for lack of a better word, that the Premier could use to pay some of the bills and all that good stuff.

It's a pretty scary proposition when you think of what we're doing and dealing with here. The plan is what really scares me because while people may believe there is one, we've yet to see it. I've heard Members of government say: Tell us your plan. It's easy enough to say but we're not in government and we don't understand the whole situation to be quite frank.

There has to be a plan and the plan has to include the people of this province. It has to be a plan where men and women get back to work. It has to be a plan where there's not an excuse. It has to be a plan where we don't talk about the rest of the world. If we sit here and wait for COVID to be over and wait for the rest of the world to solve our problems we will be years and years behind.

We assisted Guyana in their research for oil and gas; we went on trade missions. They're a very, very young industry down there and they're already years ahead of us. Not a few months, not a few wells, not a few rigs, they are light years ahead of us and we went to help them. The sad part about that is for some reason we can't help ourselves.

I've said that we're rich in resources and we're a province that has it all. We may have it all but we have a government that doesn't know what to do with it. The time has come for us to come up with a plan and a path forward where we utilize our own men and women and we utilize a Newfoundland-first mentality. A plan where we look at secondary processing. A plan where we don't just provide funding for buildings to grow marijuana, but one where we know it's going to be packaged and sold here. A plan where aquaculture is not only grown in Newfoundland, but one where it's packaged and shipped around the world from here.

We missed the boat on so many things and now the federal cousins look at us like a floating dock. It's as if they want to cut the ropes and set us free. Let us sail to sea and forget about us. That's not good enough.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARROTT: It's time for people in government to go to Ottawa and demand better because we deserve better.

We all know that we deserve better. The men and women of this province deserve better. The people who work in this House of Assembly deserve better. The men and women who work for this House of Assembly and all government services deserve better. Everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador deserves better. Better is reachable; it's attainable.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) an election.

MR. PARROTT: No, I don't want to have an election.

AN HON. MEMBER: Don't sound like it (inaudible).

MR. PARROTT: Yeah, it doesn't sound like you don't either.

The reality of the world is that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Chair, I'll remind the Member across the way that he says we're always talking about an election, but it seems to me that he likes to (inaudible) about the election a lot more than we do.

Mr. Chair, back on point. Newfoundland and Labrador right now is the most vulnerable it's been in years. The only way for us to get out of this is together as a province, as a government, that works together with people who know the truth about what's happening and people who are fighting for their futures. Right now, they're not fighting for futures.

\$320 million from the feds for oil and gas and we've heard on the news as recently as today that none of that is for the refinery because it has nothing to do with the offshore. I'll tell you, North Atlantic refinery certainly does produce oil from the offshore.

Perhaps that's an angle that the government should be looking at. There are lots of angles that we should be looking at. If we don't look at the angles, we won't find the solutions.

Mr. Chair, that's all I have to say for right now. I'm sure I'll be back in a little bit.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Foremost, I have to say this is kind of uneasy, you being a former educator and me being a former student. Far too often did I spend at the front of the class, sitting next to the teacher.

It's a great pleasure, once again, to speak to the House of Assembly and the people of the province on behalf of the District of Mount Pearl North. I guess, when we think about this budget, just to put it into the harsh reality, the amount of revenue that we take in is only equal to the top three items of our total budget. I stand to be corrected on that. Maybe someone will be able to correct me a couple of a billion dollars, but I highly doubt it.

When you think about the top three expenses in our budget being: health, interest that we pay on our financial commitments and education, every other service that government provides, facility it operates would not have the cash flow to continue to operate. That's the stark reality of the situation we're in. As has often been said, we wouldn't run our households like that, so why do we continue to run our province like that? Why do we continue to spend beyond our means?

I spoke to this yesterday, and I had one of my comments taken by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I guess, either in his ignorance of the situation or a focused intent to make a political play out of it. That comment was we are over paved. Yes, I do believe that we are over paved. We have far too many kilometres to maintain and it is not sustainable for the amount of people we have.

This government initiated a regionalization consultation, as it did many other consultations, back in 2016, four years ago. Do you know what has been done, Mr. Chair, since then? Absolutely nothing. Four years have gone passed and nothing has been done. How can we continue to operate? The only reason why we were able to borrow this money that we have to spend this year is by the grace of the Bank of Canada. Do you know what? The buck has to stop here. It is irresponsible and unsustainable for us to continue to spend as we are.

In 2015, there was a change of government. But do you know what we really needed to do at that point? We needed to change how we govern, not a change of government. We, as a province, needed to change how we govern, not a change of government. We needed to be more sustainable, invest where there is a true return

and manage our expenses and that hasn't happened.

We're paving roads that in less than a decade, maybe less than two decades, they will be a road to nowhere and that's just a trend that's happening right across the whole entire planet. When we have so little money, how are we going to be able to justify to future generations when they drive down those roads, and they're paying an exorbitant amount of in sales tax, to pay back money that we borrowed to pave those roads. I can't see it at all. I can't see the logic in continuing to be proud of spending money that we are shouldering on future generations. This has to stop.

I'll say it more and more, over and over again, that we have to be more self-reliant on ourselves. There is no reason – my colleagues on this side and throughout the House have all spoke about how the opportunity and potential is there. But opportunity and potential can only be enabled as a benefit as long as there's initiative to capitalize upon those opportunities. The only ones who are going to do it are the people in this province.

Far too often have we played second fiddle to other province's dreams and goals. The LNG sector is a huge opportunity for us. Are we fighting for that? That's a question. I look forward to hearing from the other side.

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible) roadblocks left behind.

MR. LESTER: Guess what? A true leader can get around a roadblock, Sir.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LESTER: That's how you do it.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North has the floor.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have to look forward, but we do have to take what is happened in the past, there is no doubt. Yes, I'm pretty sure we can highlight every administration in the past, their failures, and

they've all had successes. Believe it or not, even this administration has had successes.

What we have to do is not live by our failures, but we have to learn by them. That's not what we are doing today in this House. Far too often, we reflect on our failures as a way to make an excuse for the lack of accomplishment in the present and that's not acceptable, Mr. Chair.

When we look at the investments of government, when I look at the investments of government in agriculture, what we have done over the past four years is we have increased the reliance on our agricultural industry on the civil service. The Transplant Program, which is talked about fairly often – we talked about millions of plants. When you divide that out amongst every man, woman and child in this province, it equates to five heads of cabbage each per year. That's not really a big dent in where we need to go. It's a step. It's maybe not even a step; it's a thought of a step. But it is heavily reliant on the civil service to produce those transplants.

In efforts to reduce the cost of operating government, we have to look at: Would we be better off spending that money in the hands of producers that may be able to produce the same at a much more efficient cost? I'm not discrediting the work of the individuals at Wooddale, because they're doing fine work, but when we look at a government that is trying to reduce the amount of expenditures that it's having, we cannot increase the reliance of industry on government. We have to put the independence in private industry.

Mr. Chair, in the district I represent there's a vibrant community, a well-connected community. The effect of COVID on our community has been particularly hard on many people. One of the areas that it's been particularly hard in is the athletic and recreational component of our community. Recreation and athleticism is largely a component of health. That component, being a component of health, is ultimately the responsibility of government. That's why when our communities reach out for additional funding to operate these facilities, government has to listen. It is part of an investment in good, healthy well-being.

Mr. Chair, while I may sound pretty negative, and I apologize for that, but that's a reality we face today. It's not too late to turn the ship away from the rocks; it's not too late to put a firm hand on the wheel. We as a province, we as a people – and just like the Member for Cape St. Francis said – all need to pull together in the one direction. In order to do that, we have to be confident we're going in the right direction. As it stands right now, I question that myself. As it stands right now, I see what we can be doing. I hear it from all sides of the House. Yes, we talk about it but we really need to act upon it and act upon it together. Now is not the time for any more studies, no more consultations. There is the intellectual power within our civil service and within this House to do what needs to be done and there's no time to do it than the present.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I must say, congratulations for sitting in that seat. There could be nobody any better fitting to be there than you.

Mr. Chair, I would just like to start off on the essential workers in our area. I would just like to put a thank you out to them for what they did. During COVID, the smaller grocery stores, the people on the front lines, they stepped up when we needed them to. The people in the Exploits District are resilient people, so I would just like to mention some ...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. FORSEY: As the Member for Corner Brook said last night, I'm glad I have the attention and co-operation of all the House. It's good to be able to speak here.

Mr. Chair, yes, as a District of Exploits, the people are resilient. I've seen the people from Exploits go through a lot in their times. They went from fires, floods, closure of railways, paper mills and the collapse of the fishery. They did that and I saw that with the collapse of the fishery. That was in the small community of Leading Ticks, a place where I grew up and

was raised. I'm very proud to say that, very proud of that little community that I'm from. But I saw the fishery take a lot of beatings on a lot of people at that time. It wasn't nice. There were a lot of people that moved out West. A lot of people left the community. It probably took the community down to half its population and the same thing with the rest of it.

When the paper mills left, when the railways left, a lot of people went out West. They went out West to chase the oil. They went out West to chase the jobs. When that went down, they started to come home again but they've come home to nothing, Mr. Chair. They've come home to a province now that's pretty well empty in work, pretty well empty in jobs. But we have our resources, Mr. Chair, that we have to tap into. We touched on some of it last night. Yes, right now we have the mineral resource; we have got Marathon Gold, of course, going up in the Millertown area, Valentine Lake.

There's a lot more in there, Mr. Chair, that we could tap in to, a lot more resources. Maybe there are some more minerals that we can tap into there. We have a lot of resources and there's some happening on the Baie Verte Peninsula, of course. The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay would know that. We've got a big area of that kind of stuff, Mr. Chair, that we could probably do a lot more to help this province.

Forestry, again, we spoke about it last night. We have no secondary operation no more, no secondary processing in the Central West. There seems to be some confusion, I think, in regard to Central East and Central West these days. It's not just Central. I'll call it Central but I'll be more specific and say Central West, I guess. If we had more operation, more forestry activity in the Central West area, it would certainly help our districts, help the area, help the economy and help all of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair.

Farming, again, of course, is another big thing that can be done in there. We talked about it again last night and I'm sure the minister and I might get a chance to talk about some of those operations as well. There's great vegetable farming there. There's more we can do. I know there's some work being done with regard to diversifying the farming industry but I'm sure

there's more we can do with regard to land and agriculture. I know there's some land probably put aside for farming and agriculture, but sometimes I wonder what that land consists of, how much of it is hill and mountain and how much of it is actually bog and that kind of stuff that can't be tapped into. Maybe we have to look at some better areas that we can tap into and make the farmers have the places that they could use those products, Mr. Chair, and be more utilized of the products.

Again, I mentioned the essential workers when I started but I'd also like to mention the community sector groups in the Exploits District. The community sector provides big help to our communities in the region, especially the fire departments; all of them are volunteer fire departments. They raise their own money and they help out the communities.

We have our church groups that help out the communities. This time with the COVID and with the economy the way it is, there are becoming a lot of social problems, Mr. Chair. Those community sector groups are certainly stepping up to the plate. I know the Lions Clubs in particular, the Kin centres, Elks clubs, Knights of Columbus, like I say, all the community sector groups, they're feeling the gap right now in our economy. In the Exploits District, that's certainly helped to fill a void.

The Lion Max Simms camp, of course, is fully funded by Lions across Newfoundland and Labrador. That camp is for the disabled. It's a beautiful camp. If anybody who never had a chance to visit it should take an opportunity to try to go see it. What it does for even health care, basically - that's what it would fall under. The Max Simms camp has that camp full all the time with regard to disabled people, the blind and others that really take part in the camp. That is filled by the community sector groups of our province.

Mr. Chair, getting back to the minerals and forestry, I've heard some geologists and people in our area that find that maybe there's too much red tape to get to the products. Water Resources seems to be a problem when it comes to geologists finding minerals and getting minerals taken from the ground without being aggravated too much with regard to the red tape. Maybe

there's some red tape in that area that we could lift to help get the minerals resources back on tap.

Also, Mr. Chair, when I look at it, it is an aging population. In some of the areas there is an aging population and we need some more programs with regard to drug programs. A lot of times the drug programs that we have, the drugs are not covered on different ones. I'd like to see some more extra ones put in place with regard to the drug programs for the seniors. After all, the seniors, as my colleague for Cape St. Francis mentioned, paved the way. They put us here where we are. They paved the way. They built our communities; they built our districts. Again, they were the ones that put us through back when the papers mills, the railways, the floods and those things happened in the Exploits District. They helped carry us through. Right now, Madam Chair, we need to be helping those people as much as we can in regard to drug programs.

Dental care is another one that we could tap into a little bit more for the seniors. Madam Chair, they have a bit of difficulty getting dental work done. Eye care is another one. I'm getting a lot of seniors that are asking for eye care, glasses, that sort of stuff. It's not covered under their insurance programs. Mr. Chair – I'll keep up with all the changes that are happening here, I guess. It's a good thing I'm up front.

Anyway, it's good to sit here, Mr. Chair, and talk about my district. There is more that we can do in that district. We have lots of resources. We have lots of minerals and resources that we can take a good, deep, hard look at and hopefully get some more resources happening in our economy, in our region and in Newfoundland as a whole and create more employment. Let's put Newfoundland back where it should be.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have to say it's a proud moment to see you up there sitting in that Chair. It's good on you.

I think it's an honour here again tonight to be able to speak for the people of the Ferryland District. It's a great privilege. I'm going to touch on a few things in the district here as I get a chance. First of all, I'd like to recognize all the volunteers in all our districts, but especially my district. I'm going to touch on most communities if I can.

Volunteers, for all the stuff that you've done in your lifetime and you grew up – I'll use hockey as an example. There's an arena in the Goulds; there's an arena in the Southern Shore. The people that have your kids or someone else's kids up there, they're volunteering their time to run minor hockey throughout this province. It's great they be recognized. They keep the kids active and when they're active they're keeping them out of trouble. As the teacher in front of me from St. John's Centre had said, when kids are active, most times kids will stay out of trouble. That's not always necessarily the case, but generally that's where it is.

They do a great job in running those programs. That's just one area in the district that I'm thinking about. You have 200 and 300 kids in a group, so to keep those active and keep them active for six to seven months is a big chore. They're volunteering their time and it doesn't go unnoticed by me because I did it for 25 years, I'm going to say, or more. I had, I'm going to say, the privilege of a Sunday morning up at a power skating session that I ran for 25 years. My daughter took it over and she's running it now.

We have restrictions due to COVID. We have 23 kids allowed, 30 on the ice and myself, my daughter and son-in-law, so that makes 26. Then we have four kids that volunteer their time to be able to come up through. It started through the school and we try to get them 30 hours. I'm not sure where that sits this year with volunteer hours, but to see the kids there and see the parents, how responsive they are – they come in; they're not allowed in dressing rooms. They have 22 seats put out, or 23 seats.

The parents have a designated spot in the stands that they can stand and watch their kids, and the grandkids probably have to get permission to

come in. You sign when you go into the building. As the Member for Cape St. Francis said, kids will adapt. They're coming in with masks on; they're coming in with their gear on. They go on the ice, they do their session and they come back off again and out through the door, so there's no hanging around. That gives the arena, the people that are there, time to clean up, time to sanitize all the chairs and away they go from there.

In doing a session, I said to the parents: You have some kids out there four and five years old and they're crying; they want to see their mom and dad. I said: Don't come out, leave them on the ice. They're not going to die of thirst in 50 minutes. They will get over it. You're only teaching them a life lesson. You go over to the parents and say: Listen, this will get better each week. Due to COVID rules – and you explain it all. They just nod their head in approval. You're out being a leader in your community and you're out teaching kids some life skills. The parents understand that. They understand where it is. They want their kids to be active and that's why they're there.

I'd like to recognize that's just one group of volunteers. In the Goulds there's the Goulds Lions Club. Last year, before COVID hit, I went to a graduation in the Goulds. It was my first graduation. I was impressed with the Goulds Lions Club. I would think in the night they gave out, I'm going to say, 15 to 20 scholarships to students. That's a lot for \$100 each. That's a lot to donate.

These are groups that get together. They raise funds to support the communities, support the schools and whatever they can support. I'm sure it's people in their areas and it's just so good to see. I was sitting there in the back row. They come and bring greetings from the area and from the government, and just watch the group go up there, name after name, donating \$100 to 15 to 20 kids, it was unbelievable. I had to go speak to them. Later on that winter I did have an opportunity to go to a Christmas dinner during a snowstorm. They thought it was pretty good that I got there during a snowstorm, but it's just to get there and to be recognized. I thought it was great. They did a great job so I'd like to recognize them as well.

I'll touch on a couple of issues and we all have those; one is cellphone coverage. I'll drive home tonight; when I leave here I'm probably on the phone until I get home normally. I could be talking to one of my buddies or he'll be coming in the road and I'll say: B'y, you must be in the Goulds now at the bridge. He'll say: What do you have, a GPS on me? I'll say there are dead zones. We know where they are; all the time you're driving through them.

Middle Pond is another area in the district. When you leave Tors Cove and go to Cape Broyle, there's absolutely no cellphone coverage. When you get outside of Ferryland to Aquaforte until you get to Fermeuse, there's some bad cellphone coverage there. When you leave Renew's to go to Cappahayden there's no cellphone coverage there.

That's not counting how slow the Internet service is for people in the area that are doing schooling from MUN. I get some calls from kids that are going to MUN and their high-speed Internet is so bad. We all have that issue. That's not something that I'm criticizing anyone for; it's just something that we have to look at as a government to try to improve. It's something that we should definitely act on because if the schools ever get shut down again – God forbid that happens – we're going to be in areas that some kids are going to be disadvantaged because of cellphone coverage and Internet speed. It is something that we should definitely look at.

Another issue that has come up since September, obviously, is our busing. We have some areas that we have 46 on a bus. I will say this again – and I think it should be looked at – 46 on a bus wearing a mask, which I think is good, no problem. I don't see any reason why we couldn't put – it's available for 72 seats so if you miss the first two seats behind the driver, it gives you 66 seats. I think if you put a mask on them and put them on the bus, I think you could take care of all the seating issues.

I know that doesn't come from the government, it's the health advisor, but it's something that I think can definitely happen because these kids are in school with 30 and 35 in a class with no masks. To put them on a bus and have 66, there has to be some logic to it. I'm sure they thought that out pretty good, but just thinking out loud

that 66 kids with a mask on should be able to happen. I don't see why it can't happen. The 1.6, if it was there, then it would be gone. We waited for extra buses but we still have kids that are not taken care of that had courtesy seating.

I recognize there was courtesy seating but we still have parents that are trying to make things work. They thought at the end of September it would be ironed out. It's now the end of October and we still have kids that – I realize it is courtesy seating and it is a courtesy seat, but they were taken care of last year. There's no reason, I don't think – and I'd like to hear some logic on it, but there's no reason we can't put 66 kids on a bus with a mask on. I'm sure the epidemiology is there that they're going to say maybe it can't, but I haven't heard that.

You go to an arena, there are 23, 25 kids there. There are 30 allowed on the ice. There are 30 kids in some of these classes with no masks on. I don't want to be sitting here and ragging on people, that's not the purpose, but it is an issue that people are trying to deal with.

I see some frustration over there tonight in some of the comments we're making here. When we did the 90 days to go back to 60 days and we sat here for three hours, frustrated to death, and listened to all the stuff that was going on over there, I was sitting here saying: B'ys, we have to answer; we have to speak on this. We had to answer.

It's the same thing. When we're asking you questions, you can't take it personal. It's not the way it should be. If we ask a question that's a tough question, your heads roll back, you roll your eyes. That's not the way it should be. We're not trying to pick on anybody; we're just trying to ask a question that people are asking. Sometimes I just sit over here and it's a question that we're asking, and for somebody to roll their eyes or roll their head. That's what people want asked. That's what they want us to ask and that's our job. So don't take it personally.

I said at home, if people had wigs on when their head rolled back that fast, their hair would be on the floor. That's the way their head shot backwards. It was just frustrating, that's all. I had the same frustration when I spoke in the House when we went from 90 to 60 days, and

I'm sure you're going to get the same from listening to us over here now for the next few hours and the same kind of thing; hard to answer and hard to take.

The shoe is on the other foot now, I'm going to say, but don't take it personally. We're asking questions that people want asked, and we respect that you'll give us an answer if you can. I'm throwing this out there in amongst the busing but if there's an answer there then I think we could look at it. I just don't see how it can't happen. Maybe there's something that can't but hopefully we can look at that in the near future and solve this busing issue and get the rest of our kids on these buses so we can get back to a regular life.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's nice to see you up there. You're doing a great job.

I'll just take a few minutes now. I want to talk a bit about my district, but the kids in my district. Watching them through all these challenging and interesting times and watching my own kids, they've adapted very well. We have to give them more credit that they deserve because they seem to take this all very well. They seem to adapt. They seem to be able to handle this. They're little troopers, I have to say.

Even with my own kids, I figured when we started putting masks in public areas and things like that, my four-year-old, I thought this is going to be interesting, to ask her to wear a mask. Surprisingly, not an issue. Her sister was wearing one; she wanted one on. We understand that if you teach them and you explain to them and speak to them like they're little adults, they seem to adapt. I'm watching it now. I flick through social media just to see what the schools are up to and all that. They're still carrying on through all these interesting times.

I was just reading about how kids in a Grade 6 class in the middle school in Wabush, J.R.S., they're learning about hydroponic, growing lettuce in their classroom. We're teaching our kids some great skills that I wish I learned back then. We didn't have any classes about gardening. We didn't even have civics class. Even how the House of Assembly operates, it's not taught in schools anymore. We're seeing a comeback of these kind of skills and the things that we need to move forward. This is the stuff we need to keep encouraging going forward.

Even though we're in these COVID times and everything like that, we need to make sure we're giving the skill sets to the children that they can do better than us. Those ones coming behind us will do better than us. That's why we have to keep making sure we give the proper attention, the right investments and all these into places that are important. One of the most important places is the kids that are coming behind us, because all the decisions we make here may not affect us today, but for sure my daughter and anyone else's child in here, or grandchild, they're the ones that have to come behind us and live with the consequences of what we do here today.

We lost a large percentage of our farming and how much we actually produce as a province because of decisions that were made before us. Now we're doing the smart thing and teaching our younger people, well we made this mistake but here are some skills that you can go forward and correct. That way we have food security. We have these important things.

It doesn't have to start with agriculture and aquaculture, but even in technology. At one point I used to laugh at my dad and say, well, how can you mean you can't use a smartphone or why can't you get on the Internet and anything like that. Now, my daughter is showing me how to do things on a computer. You just have to stop and think that it's a progressive thing the way we move forward. Some old stuff stalls with me, but things are moving so fast paced that it's the younger ones who are picking up on it faster and faster.

My daughter is in Grade 5 now. I look at some of her work and I'm going, you're learning that in Grade 5? Because things have progressed and

moved and we've adapted, and they pick up things faster. I have to say, kids today are very, very well adapt to the world around them. We have to keep thinking of what investments do we want to make now that will affect tomorrow and they're left in a better place than what we were left as a society; the province, that they pick up from where we left off, is in a better place that they can go forward and adapt. That's where key investments and key spots and key things that we do today will help.

The technology sector is a very great one, and that's why I encourage it. We should make investments in to our education in our high schools and colleges to make sure these kids have the skills for the jobs they want to do, that they see as a future for us.

I always go to coding and robotics and computer engineering and things like that, it seems to be the way of the future. I speak to the mining companies and they tell me they want more adapt programming for the region, for kids in the region and for young adults. Yes, they're still looking for machinists and millwrights and welders and all those things but they're also looking for computer repair people, coders, things that a future mining industry would look for.

They're looking for the right skill sets for instrumentology, even different types of engineering and stuff now that wasn't thought about even 10, 15 years ago. We have a new world, we have a new thing, and the youth of the province is where the bright spot is. We have the ability to do it but we just need the right key investments to make sure that we have the forethought before we make decisions on where we're going to go with investing and where we're going to put the right things in place for younger people.

We have great infrastructure. There's a College of the North Atlantic in all corners of this province. Maybe it's time to have a relook at how we even educate our youth and rethink what are the trades and skills that are required for the future. I'm sure that a lot of these skills will apply to the fishery of the future, aquaculture of the future and the different kinds of worlds. It's where we're going; it's where we're moving as a society, as a people. We need

to make sure that we have the forethought to think out exactly where and when we move forward.

I'm optimistic. I think that the generation that's coming behind will have a good grasp on everything that's going on. I'm sure some of them are watching us today and probably thinking to themselves they probably have ideas of what it's like moving forward, because they're the generation that has to pick up where we leave off. Let's make sure we have the forethought to leave off in a good place for everybody. I don't doubt that they have dreams, aspirations and a vision for what they want to see and I'm sure it's very well thought out.

I'm surprised sometimes about some of the knowledge that my own little girl sometimes spouts to me. Sometimes I ask her what she's thinking and sometimes it's really interesting how she sees the world compared to how I see the world or her mother sees the world. It's very fascinating. We need to look to the kids and look to the young adults in this province as an optimistic future and a guidepost of where we want to be in 10, 15 years because I know they're counting on us to make the right decisions now so they can make the right decisions in the future.

I like to go to the college and that and go there. I'm a CNA alumni and I still like to go back and visit some of the people that are still sticking around in the Goose Bay campus. They're still there and they're still teaching similar things. It's the same classroom and the same equipment, but there are always a fresh group of faces there.

They're optimistic for a future and we need to make sure that we ask them what their thoughts and opinions are on things, because they're the ones that have to pick up where we leave off. We have to make sure that they have the right knowledge, the right skill set and the right investments in place that there's something to pick up at the end of the day. We need to make sure that we do the right thing. That's the key, just to make sure we invest in the technology and the skill sets that the world is currently operating on today.

Things have changed. Even since I've graduated college, it's changed so rapidly. The industries,

the way that business is conducted, everything, it's faster and faster. Honestly, some days it's hard to keep up on the pace that technology and innovation has moved. It's something phenomenal to think about.

Not that long ago I was dialing up on the land line and interrupting everybody's day with the phone lines, but I can do everything I did on that right now on a smart phone, which is within a very short time period. So innovation and technology moves at a fast speed so we need to be able to be quick enough to grab it and take advantage of those great innovations and industries.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's kind of different looking up at you. It's not bad though. We can get used to it.

Mr. Chair, it's a pleasure to speak on this bill and it's always a pleasure to speak in this House. I think we sometimes take it for granted. We get in here for a period of time and we forget sometimes what a privilege that was actually bestowed upon us, each and every Member, to sit in this House and represent your district and take your place.

As days go by – and it was actually this morning when I was driving in, I was thinking: Well, what's in store for today? As I drive through my district – I'm fortunate enough to be able to live in my district, sleep in my district every night, which I know a lot of Members don't. As I'm driving down through Foxtrap and Long Pond, I stop and I think to myself: You're going in to take your seat and representing every person you see on that road, every resident in that community, to be their voice.

There are days you will be coming in here and you don't ask a question, or you may not do a petition, you very well might not have any input. You may have some; you may have a bit of debate. Every time you even stand in your place and vote or you speak on a piece of legislation or as we're into this budget debate now, a lot of

times, not every time, probably more times than not, though, it makes you realize what you're actually voting on, what you're actually speaking on; actually, who you're speaking for. Because I think it's not uncommon for a lot of us – and the longer you're at this you take it for granted. This is a big responsibility.

Someone a while back – and they spent a lot of years in this Legislature – said to me what happened to them after a while, they were 10 or 12 years in there, and they almost start forgetting that they were in the House of Assembly, thinking that they were home in their kitchen having a conversation. Sometimes you could react and say things just that you don't – you just blurt them out because you're getting too comfortable.

I think the key with us, as elected officials, sometimes is to remain grounded. I think that's something that is very important for everyone, I think, personally, no matter if you're elected or not. I think in politics, sometimes you feel like it's this constant battle: It's us against them and sometimes us against the world and nobody trusts nobody. We have people in our own caucus that don't trust us. The Member for Ferryland told us a few weeks ago he doesn't trust anyone on his own side, let alone on the other side. That was a message. We all have to learn something from that.

In saying that, there's an element of: There's a game on. Members opposite, they'll say we're not going to go. We were only going to have three speakers on this, but you don't know. Are they trying to pull a fast one on you? This is a tradition of the House and it's gone on for a long time. I expect it will go on a lot longer after I'm long out of this place, and probably most of us. The important thing for all of us is – my main point, and it struck me today – like I said we should never lose sight of what positions we all hold. Whether you're a minister, you're an MHA, you're a premier; ultimately, you're responsible to the people that put you there.

Ministers are bestowed to run departments for the betterment of the province, but underneath all that, when they go home at night or when they go home on the weekend, their main concern becomes – your department, you'll be always be responsible; it's the minister's role,

but you'll always still be responsible for that senior that's trying to get into a long-term care facility or that child that's leading the bus ride. It gets down to the basics and that is the very raw-boned basics.

As a matter of fact, this afternoon I was here, and sometimes lots of things happen in politics, we know, and you get frustrated. I went to the caucus room and I start calling parents about busing issues. I was talking to a lady about her mother is in a long-term care home, ironically. After a half-an-hour conversation with those people, with my constituents, it kind of brings you back to where we need to be. That's my joy.

I've always said it's not about getting on the NTV news or on *Open Line* every day. We can call *Open Line* every day if we wanted to, I suppose, and talk to Paddy. That's never been my thing. I've always been the person – if that comes, that comes. You deal with it. It's a part of the job. The most joy I've always gotten is that of helping the residents in my district. I can speak for, I think, most everyone in this House – I think I can speak for everyone in this House that is their most joy, too.

I was fortunate enough and I don't know if the time will ever come that we'll ever go back to that side. I did work closely with ministers from previous administrations. When I look at ministers, I know what's involved with their jobs. I've been there. I haven't been a minister but I was closely aligned. I know how departments are run. I know what's behind the scenes. It's not easy. Politics is not easy for anybody. You're on one side and you're fighting to get to the other side; when you get to the other side, you have a new group of faces trying to get – you're always in pursuit.

I know the Minister – I'm the critic for him now – of Industry, Energy and Technology. I sat in this Chamber for a lot of years as a staff person, like I say. I said last night actually I feel like, election-wise, I've been – I'm in my second term, but the next election will be my fourth election because I ran in the by-election and lost and then I spent 10 years here prior to that. I remember the Speaker was a staff person as well. This brings you back and you realize you've been around here a long time. I haven't

been in this seat a long time; I feel like it compared to a lot in the House.

I know the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, she and I were elected the same time and a lot of faces across the way and I remember that. That seems like distant memories, seems so far away. You feel like you've been here forever. It is a privilege. I could spend my 10 minutes talking about other things, but it's just a reflection sometimes. It's a grounding effect sometimes, too. Again, we take an awful, awful lot of this stuff for granted and it's important. It's important to talk about it.

When we get up, we can talk about our district stuff. In my critic role a lot of times I'll talk about the oil and gas sector now. It used to be always potholes. In CBS, I'm the pothole guy. Every pothole that still breaks out they'll contact me because for some reason I have the magic solution to getting potholes fixed.

MR. P. DINN: Not any more.

MR. PETTEN: Not any more, my colleague from Topsail. I still have some connection. I still can get a pothole fixed.

But when we talk about oil and gas, we're still talking about the residents in our districts. It's just in a different level. You're talking about oil and gas; I mean, I'm talking about residents of CBS. You're talking about the whole greater good of the province, which is what role we play in an Opposition. It's the Loyal Opposition. You feel like you're always critical of government, but if you really look up the definition of Loyal Opposition, that is our role. Our role is to oppose government, not for the sake of opposing. It's meant to get better decisions.

The role of government is to defend their decisions and sometimes that turns into a bit of to and fro in this House and it can get interesting at times. Sometimes there's commentary and that comes with the House of Assembly, the back and forth. We always should be seeking to make better legislation, to make lives better for the people of this province and in doing so that's the fulfillment; that's what you're put there for.

Some people say: We like to be on the government side, during election time. We need

to be on government side. But if you don't have an Opposition, I don't think you got a good government. It's hard to pick who wins and loses. Who are you going to have in Opposition? Then it comes down to candidates and pure election readiness and willingness. But it's our democracy and it's the way it's set up. It's something that I think that sometimes it's a good reminder and I use it as a good barometer for my own self sometimes to take a step back and assess it.

I know a year or two ago in this House, I think it was 20 minutes I had and I didn't know what I was going to speak about, which most times I don't. I'll just get up and I'll pick a topic and I'll go. For some reason it was today and I was talking about being in the bubble. My good friend, the person I replaced and a good friend of mine, the former MHA for CBS, he used to always talk about that. He said: We're always in a bubble. You're in a bubble in there.

You get in there and we think we're doing great, he said, and you walk out and you read the newspaper and you turn on the radio and it would be like – that's when they were in government – you're not doing as good as you think you are. You're in this room and everyone is telling you: Yes, everything is great; it's wonderful. He said, then you go for a weekend and you go to a festival, you go somewhere else and you come home and Sunday evening you're depressed. We're not doing so good after all. He always used that as his forum, and he's a pretty successful politician. He used it as his own measuring tool to keep himself grounded, to get back to the reality, to get back to the basics, he would call it.

I remember spending a full 20 minutes talking about it. When I spoke about it different people happened to be watching us. People say no one is watching it, but people actual watch us. A lot of people found a really interesting concept is that – that full concept because sometimes you get lost in the bubble. The moral of my point is we should never lose sight of what we're here for and that's to represent the people of this province and the people of our districts, who we so proudly represent.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to have a few words here. You listen back and forth, you make notes and you listen very attentively. With the words I'm going to have, I don't want to diminish any hard times that people are going through. I know the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans brings it up about people with their cars and the mental stress, and it's true. It's reality. It is reality.

I know the government – every person here in this House would want to make everything all right for people. But when you look at perspective, I'll just go back. I've been involved a small bit with an orphanage in Africa and some schools in Africa and a few other groups in Africa. With the pandemic hitting in Africa and when you look at the culture of Africa, Uganda and Kenya, the female is usually the breadwinner of the house. What they usually do, if you had the length of this House and you could see down, there are probably about 100 little stalls there. What they do is they sell food along the stalls. That's how they make their money to eat.

Down there in the last five or six months, they were all shut down. They were shut down. A lot of them were hungry, one meal a day. Some, no meals a day. I know a lot of Members here – when I was doing – still doing it – with the shoes, with the jiggers. I know a lot of Members in this House on both sides supported me on that and gave me donations towards that. When you see kids down there with no shoes, jiggers, can't walk because they have these parasites in their feet – they can't walk, no food – it puts it in a perspective here for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I don't mean to diminish any of the hardships that are going through Newfoundland and Labrador but my point is, we're going to get through it. We'll get through it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: The point I'm trying to make is our life now, is about 100 million people's dream to be where we are, even with the hard times we have, because it is tough. It is tough in a lot of those countries through the pandemic. When you take the pandemic in Africa where you – actually, I know one school, Mama Kevina school, Sister Claire, when she had people put their hands through the gates to get food – kids. It's tough. It's really tough. But when you look at Newfoundland and Labrador right now, we are going through a tough time, we are. There are a lot of people, a lot of concerns.

I'm sure a lot of the Members here are fighting for their constituents to get stuff done. I remember back with the cod moratorium, also. It was tough, but we got through it.

When I look at this House now and I look at all of us – I know the Member for CBS just gave a speech about the Opposition keeping government accountable. It's so true. But we all have to try to remember that we will get through this. I can assure you, in years to come we will look back at this here and we'll say, yes, it was a tough time, when we're sitting down in our rocking chairs and we talk about the pandemic and the people in this Legislature – there are only 40 of us. There are a privileged few to be sitting in this Legislature. We'll sit back and say, yes, it was a tough time, but here's how we all worked through it. That's what we have to look at is the future and how we can plan for the future.

I can assure you that as tough as we have it here in Newfoundland and Labrador, some of the situations I've been seeing in the last three or four years, it's tough. It's a lot tougher than we what have here. I don't mean to diminish anybody who's losing their home or their car. I don't diminish that one bit. That's where we have to come in with a good Opposition to get good government. We all have to work together somehow to try to find a solution to it. I can assure you, we're the dream of a lot of people in this world through this pandemic, Newfoundland and Labrador, even with our tough times.

I say to Sister Clare and I'll say to Marjorie and the girls who are running hope, the orphanage

down in Africa, I know the tough time they're having getting food through to the orphans down there that they're responsible for. They're doing a great job of it. I know Sheila (inaudible) down in Kenya who's still doing jiggers. When you see some of the pictures that she just sent me of people with no shoes with jiggers who can't walk and who are begging for food, we have to feel lucky. We still have to strive to do what we can for people here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador so we can help out others less fortunate.

I won't speak much longer, Mr. Chair, but to the MHAs in this House, we are the fortunate ones to try to put Newfoundland and Labrador on the course that we're going to get through this and come through it. Every concern that's raised in this House that I made notes of is a real concern for everybody. What we have to focus on is that we as a group, we will get through this. We will get through this. Let's keep the debate going back and forth. It's great to have a debate back and forth to offer good ideas and offer some things that should be done or can't be done and come up with some solutions. I can assure you, even with the condition we're in now, we're the envy of many.

I, for one, I'm no different from any MHA in this House. If a concern comes up and you think we can help people out, we're going to do it. No matter how passionate we become, it's a reality that we have to work for our constituents and work to make a better place for the people we represent. I'm no different and I'll do that.

As I said before and I'll say it again, we will get through it. I know we have to keep the government's feet to the fire and I know the government has to stand up and make tough decisions to get through this. I know there are so many issues that arose within this pandemic – we go to the offshore and we can go out to many other places, Mr. Chair. It's tough times.

I know a lot of people in the schools, it's tough times, but we will get through it. I just want to say, keep up the voices here in this House to each other because we need that. We need the passion. We have to have passion. When you get passion on both sides of the House – not just one, on both sides of the House – you'll get good results, because that's what makes us

remember what we're doing here, is to help out the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I can assure you there are a lot of people I know, I deal with in other places, that are going through a lot more difficult time than us and they have a lot of hope also. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador, just keep the hope. Let's keep our work going. Things will get better for all of us. We have to try to find the best way possible to end this pandemic, end the issues that are related to the pandemic, move our economy forward and move the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

It's good to see your face in the Chair. You're doing a great job.

It's always a pleasure in this House to speak, especially as a representative for the wonderful people from the scenic community and District of Topsail - Paradise. I actually just came back from a meeting this evening with a group there discussing a community playground and community park. It's one thing the District of Topsail - Paradise has is a very young community, a very vibrant community with a good seniors community as well; lots of volunteers, lots of kids, lots of activities. I'm surrounded by many schools: four K to 6 schools, one K to 4, a high school, a middle school and soon to be open another intermediate school, so lots of kids in and around the district.

Today and this evening, I just want to take an opportunity to talk about an issue I saw when I worked with government and I think it's an issue that's become more evident now through COVID. We see a lot of individuals who are struggling with employment opportunities, being put out of work, working part-time and so on.

The Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour have programs that are funded to assist individuals in obtaining employment; huge

dollars contributed from the feds under the Labour Market Development Agreement. You're looking at somewhere in the range of \$130 million-plus. These programs are designed specifically to assist people in getting back to work. There are some parameters: You have to be EI eligible, you have to be out of work for two years or out of school for two years and you have to have made a proper search for a job in your area.

That's fine in, we'll call, normal times, but in my district I've been approached by many individuals who are looking to continue their careers or have a career change as a result of COVID and there's no flexibility when it comes to the programming that's available. You either fit in that box or you don't. Granted, there are programs there for many different types of individuals in different situations, but it doesn't always cover everyone.

I just want to go through, just give a description of some of these cases that I've experienced. I certainly won't be identifying anyone, but I'm sure everyone in this House of Assembly has experienced similar inquiries, again, more prevalent because of COVID.

I had a young individual. He's enrolled in college. He plans on returning to college full-time in the following year in a computer programming course. His goal was to improve his education skills, obtain gainful employment and earning sufficient income to meet his basic living needs. He's working part-time. He works at a warehouse, this individual, but he wants to do better. He wants to do better and improve himself. He wants to move out into his own apartment and support himself.

His gross income was a little under \$900 a month and his basic expenses, if he had to move out, would be around \$1,600 a month. That's very basic; however, when he applied he doesn't meet the criteria because he's working and making too much money. Imagine, making too much money. There's a case where we need more flexibility within our programming.

I have another gentleman. He was accepted into a computer programming course at the College of the North Atlantic. They tell him he hasn't been unemployed long enough and, as a result,

doesn't meet the basic eligibility criteria. This individual worked in the oil and gas industry. He graduated with a petroleum engineering technology degree back in 2014. He has a fiancée and a young daughter. As a result of COVID, he's been laid off with no possible option for callback over the next three years. He wants to better himself. He does not meet the criteria because he hasn't been out of work long enough.

I have another individual, a pilot. He's been laid off. There's no end in sight for the airline industry. He's been told two to three years before he expects a callback. He wants to go back to carpentry school and he has been accepted. He wants to go to school and start his new business, start a new career. He missed the deadline applying for the Skills Development Program by a couple of days. He was told to wait until he receives EI and come back next year. Again, we need to be more flexible.

Another individual works full-time hours at security. He's out of school two years; he was accepted to the industrial millwright mechanics course. Because he couldn't get a letter from his current employer to say that he would not get more than 20 hours a week part-time – because of that – not eligible.

Another individual accepted into the cooking program at the College of the North Atlantic visited the office July 20 and told the deadline was July 19. Imagine. Was also told that because of that, there would not be sufficient time to provide the appropriate assessment on whether, in this case, he would be eligible. The list goes on. I have a number here, but I think I've made my point.

This is not a criticism of the staff of these departments – not at all. They are given guidelines and they are given policies that they follow. Some of the individuals in Immigration, Skills and Labour – a lot of social workers; a very, very good profession, career, but under a lot of stress at many times. A lot of that stress is due to caseload, but also due to the fact you have individuals you want to help, but the means are not there to allow it. You have income cut-offs – and I'll toss it out there. For example, say a \$20,000 income, you're qualified; \$20,001, you're not. That's what they're tied to.

My point, going back to the situations that I've raised, goes back to – and it has always, always, for as long as I've worked for the department, and we worked under the NLDA agreements and it continues to this day – flexibility in the programs. We live in a province, right now, with the highest unemployment rate, declining population under any scenario, an aging population and it can go on and on and on. I can tell you right now that the same program applied in Quebec has a lot more leeway than we do. I think it's really time for us – and I say us, the collective us – to push the envelope on flexibility amongst these programs.

We talk about people falling through the cracks. I just read off half a dozen cases that I have. I guarantee you that this is one big crack because we have a lot of people falling through it. For the sake of standing up for the people of this province and putting some money from a NLDA agreement – I'll call it a slush fund. Call it what you want, call it an exception fund, but there are cases out there – very good cases – that need to be funded. We need to fund them and the money is there to do it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have another opportunity to speak to this bill. Mr. Chair, there are so many different things, I suppose, that you could talk about. No shortage of topics, that's for sure. I do want to pick up, though, on a couple of things, listening to the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. I was listening to some of his comments and it really struck me because I have a number of people that I've talked to, who have reached out to me, a number of people in my district who were in that exact same boat.

A lot of times people have this, I'm going to say, misconception – because it can be a misconception – about my district. My district – not unlike some of the other urban districts, but certainly in my district a lot of the people, a large portion of the demographic, if you will, are

working, professional people; a lot of cases two-family incomes. A lot of people working in the public service, whether it be here in this building or teachers or nurses or doctors or dentists.

There are a lot of small business owners over in Southlands and in parts of Mount Pearl a lot of small business owners. Also, a lot of people employed in oil and gas, some of them working on the rigs as roustabouts and so on. A lot of them, though, are engineers and those types of jobs, highly skilled, technical jobs. A lot of them working in Alberta in the oil sands – rotational workers. Some of them are what's been deemed as regular rotational workers coming from Alberta or different parts of the country. I also have a number of international rotational workers who are working in Africa, the Middle East and everywhere on the globe, primarily in the oil and gas industry.

Generally speaking, when you think of that demographic you'd say they're doing well and in normal times they are doing well. They're living in nice homes. The average home over in Southlands is about \$400,000, \$450,000 as a mortgage; the same thing in many parts of Mount Pearl. Some of them are a bit lower. There's a range but certainly in Admiralty Wood it's \$450,000, \$500,000, \$550,000, \$600,000 some of them. A lot of parts of the district they're probably \$300,000, \$350,000 that type of thing.

Galway, not a lot of people living there yet, but, again, high-end homes. Yes, they have a nice SUV and so on, probably and they probably have a second vehicle; their house is nice; their kids are in dance and hockey and everything else.

Sometimes when you look at a situation like this and you're saying, those people aren't impacted by any of this, they're doing fine. There is no issue with them. We talk about the people who are lower income, we talk about the fixed income seniors and so on, and not diminishing their situation at all. I do have some people in some parts of my district in that boat as well and not diminishing it one bit, but, the reality of it is, if you have a household and they're making good money, nobody gave it to them. A lot of them, they worked hard for it. Built up a business, took a risk, a lot of them. A lot of them

had to go to university for five or six or seven years and so on to get what they have around them, but like most of us, the bank owns it, owns most of it for at least 25 years or 30 years, whatever the case might be.

When these people are hit by COVID-19 and we talk about well CERB came along and so on. CERB was great. I'm not knocking it. I know we're going to have to pay it back at some point, the federal government, we're all going to have to pay it, as taxpayers, but the federal government, as far as I'm concerned, did what they had to do and we all appreciated it; the money that's been put in so people can survive. We're lucky we are in a country that was able to do that.

But \$2,000, yeah, some people it sort of replaced their income. Some people, they're better off than they ever were on CERB. Some would argue there are some people who didn't want to go back to work, even if they could have went back to work because they were getting more money home on CERB than they were actually working. I'm sure there are some people in that situation.

But I would say to you, if you were working in say the oil and gas industry and the bottom dropped out of the oil prices and now you're laid off or you were laid off in Alberta or whatever the case might be or you're a small business owner and all of a sudden your business is basically shut down and there's no income coming in the door. While \$2,000 a month is appreciated, it's really a drop in the bucket when you compare that \$2,000 with your expenses.

I know there are some people who make the argument, well, I have to live off \$2,000. I understand that. There are people who do. People live on a lot less, but their lifestyle is adjusted accordingly – the bills they have to pay, the mortgage they have to pay – because everybody lives to their means; most people live beyond their means. That's just reality.

Yes, there are a lot of people, even the people that would be considered well-to-do, so to speak, that are really in trouble as a result of everything that's gone on. There's a lineup that I have created. My office has created a lineup on our own – I'm just saying – from our office to Al

Antle's office of people that we've had to send down to Credit Counselling Services; people that are on the verge of insolvency, of personal bankruptcy.

Yes, there are people who are suffering silently with mental health issues as a result of this. Yes, there are people that probably have or will be thinking about doing harm to themselves. We've heard the Member talk about the calls for suicide. Does not surprise me one bit. Yes, I've had constituents who called me that their power was going to be cut off by Newfoundland Power, and embarrassed to have to call me about it.

That's the thing: A lot of these people are suffering in silence because their pride won't let them call and reach out for help. It builds up and it builds up, and they're maxed out in terms of their stress so they continue to suffer. Yes, that could lead to some pretty tragic outcomes.

Can I, in good conscience, pin the price of oil on this administration? Of course I can't. Can I pin what has happened at the Come By Chance oil refinery on this administration? Of course I can't. Can I pin what's happened with Suncor and with the White Rose Project and everything and the world oil prices and a pandemic on this government? Of course I can't. Do I want them to be doing everything they possibly can to meet with all the stakeholders, even if they are private businesses and entities, and to do everything they can to reduce red tape, to lobby the federal government to do whatever it takes to try to make some of these things viable, to get these people back to work? Of course I do.

I'm sure they are. They have constituents as well. Why would the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology want us to fail? Why would he want the Come By Chance to be shut down or the oil companies to leave Newfoundland? It's ridiculous when you think about it. Why would anybody.

I do believe they are trying, I really do, and I can't blame what's happened on them. Do I want them to keep trying? Do I want them to try harder? Absolutely, I do. Would I like to be more informed of what's going on, for us all to be more informed and have some more input? I

would, but I know they are working towards it. It is a tough time.

As my colleague from Bay of Islands has said, compare where we are to other places in the world. We've seen tough times before. As he said, we'll get through it, but we have to get through it together by working together. I certainly encourage the government to do all it can. I'm not going to be here to obstruct you but I am here to offer input and to hold your feet to the fire where necessary.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I missed quite a bit; a lot has changed since I left this House.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, it's a little later.

MS. EVANS: Yes. Just getting to talk on some of the issues now.

In my district, I talk a lot about housing. I was on a call with some university students across Canada actually this evening; this is why I was away. They're political science majors and they were talking about the issues. When it came to housing, it was all very, very negative and about the high cost, about organization and different layers and all this kind of stuff.

One of the things I wanted to mention to them, too, is the big issue with housing on the North Coast is – and this goes back to some preconceived notions. Some of the issues I've dealt with when I was going to university and when I used to work and travel in the province, a lot of people actually believed the reason why we had problems with our housing was because we didn't know how to heat them. Also, in the winter a lot of times they believed we would actually cut up our houses from the inside.

In actual fact, that did happen in the past with some houses where parents had kids and they had no way to heat the house. Their kids were

cold and they did damage to their houses. That happened a few times, and all of a sudden everyone believes it happens all the time. Those are some of the issues that I'm concerned about can impact policy, when people actually believe these issues to be true and they're given a position where they're working with a government agency or, heaven forbid, they're actually in the House of Assembly. If they have preconceived notions, it could actually be very detrimental to Indigenous populations and communities.

One of the things I wanted to mention today is we don't know how tricky homelessness is because – in actual fact, when I was campaigning in May 2016, I went into this house and there was an elderly woman there and she wasn't overly well. There were two young men, her sons. I don't think she spoke much English, so I was very friendly to her and talking to her and then I sat on the couch talking to her two sons. There was only a couch; there were no chairs in the house. I think there was one table. I didn't see the bedrooms. A very, very bare house, not well maintained, in disrepair but it was spotless. It was clean. You could tell the floors were mopped. The house was clean.

Anyway, that's all right. I was talking to them about voting for me and the PCs and the Liberals and, of course, I brought up the Lewisporte ferry. They were nodding very, very polite. I don't think they understood a word I was saying, really, in terms of comprehension.

Then, later I was in the community and I ran into one of the young fellows. He was actually working. He had a full-time job and he was working. He was really good. Anyway, I seen him. Then, later I got a call from my CA and she said I have two young men here and they're homeless. Their mother had passed away and they had lost the house. It was actually a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing house. What it was, the payments weren't kept up. When the mother got sick, she was making the payments, and the sons I guess didn't understand they were supposed to be making the payments. It wasn't that much money. I think it was under \$2,000, but the house was reclaimed. So they were tossed out on the street.

Now, the concern my CA had was that one of them is working and the other one is on social assistance. She said the young fellow wants to quit his job and he's going to go to Goose Bay because there's housing in Goose Bay. I said, what housing is there in Goose Bay? He said, well, there's actually a shelter there.

To me, that was one of my first exposures to the preconceived notion that there's actually adequate housing and shelter in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, which leads to some of the issues we're dealing with now. I had a young guy working in the community, full-time job, and his brother was on social assistance. They were evicted from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing because when the mother fell ill they got behind on the payments. He was actually going to quit his job and go to Goose Bay.

To me, that was quite alarming. I started talking to him and I said, with the shelter you're actually only allowed in the shelter from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m. and then you're put out on the street. I said, in your community right now you have people that can help you, people that will support you. Even though they were living – in actual fact, most nights they took refuge in the church. Anyway, I lobbied and advocated on their behalf and we were able to come to some arrangement where they could move back into the house and they could start back the payments.

When you look at the cost to our economy – now, if I hadn't intervened, if I hadn't been fortunate enough to actually take the call that day and ask all these questions, this young fellow, who was actually paying taxes, he was earning an income, he would have left his job and they would have gone to Happy Valley-Goose Bay to live in a shelter. Meaning, they would have been fully homeless.

I just wondered, how long would it take for some unfortunate incident to occur so that addictions would take over, or they would have been seriously injured, or they would be injured in the winter? Because sometimes what happens is people get hurt, so you're looking at a lose of taxes, lose of viable income, being able to look after themselves, becoming dependent on social services, becoming totally dependent on the system. Just imagine the financial burden that

would have occurred with these two young fellows.

I think what we have to look at is the cost of programs, the cost of housing. It may actually have a large dollar value, but when you look at the social, the mental health issues and when you look at the hidden costs that happen when we don't address issues and get at the root of them, they can be quite, quite more expensive.

I just took that situation, and I'll go to another situation where I knew of a young fellow who actually had his feet frozen. He was homeless as well. Now, what it is he actually can't get by without assistance from the government, and if you look at all of those costs of helping him.

The thing about it is for my district a lot of the issues are hidden and a lot of the costs are hidden, but a lot of the value of helping people help themselves is also hidden. A lot of people don't understand that. So it's very, very important for us to ensure not only that we help people who want to help themselves, but also we address issues where there could be gaps that people could fall into because it's very easy to do that.

I talk about my district but, in actual fact, I could be talking about any district. I could be talking about Gower Street. I could be talking about somewhere out in Stephenville. The thing about it is, we need to make sure that services are in place. When we have adequate services, we can help people help themselves and we can actually save the province a lot of money.

It just goes back to the insulin pump. What's the value of an insulin pump, really, when you look at the lifespan of a person and you look at the quality of life and you look at the less doctor visits? The thing about it is homelessness is on a similar level. If we don't start looking at the issues on the root level and trying to find solutions that actually work instead of just throwing money at things, we're not going to get ahead. In actual fact, people are going to suffer. When I speak, even now, what I'm saying is just very common sense.

Homelessness is a huge issue in my district, but the cost of homelessness actually can be quite large. Just a few little interventions, I think,

could actually help address those issues. We could easily make a big difference.

My time is winding down now, Mr. Chair, so I'm just going to finish up.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Lovely. It's been a while since we've talked about public-private partnerships, so maybe we will review and then I'll carry on. How about that?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When last I spoke, I was talking about the design, build, finance and maintain public-private partnership models and some of the perils associated with it. Not only are we having a bit of fun today; we're also learning about alliteration.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to address some key points in a recent study about the many dangers of public-private partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador. At this point, I just want to gloss over some of the key things and as the evening goes on, I'm sure I'll have the opportunity to go into some of these issues in slightly more depth.

To point out, this study notes that Newfoundland and Labrador "has a poor track record when it comes to ensuring that broad public interests in infrastructure development are not trumped by private commercial interests." What we're seeing are decisions made to provide public infrastructure, seem to put private commercial interests ahead of proper infrastructure development. That should cause alarm for all of us because, again, one of the key themes I talked about last time was the growing divide between people who receive a very high income and people who are earning far less.

An example, one of the things they talk about is: "The mishandling of the Muskrat Falls project that has forced the province to the verge of bankruptcy is" one small example. Not only have we not learnt from that, we have gone all in

on public-private partnerships. The first-time use of public-private partnerships to deliver infrastructure – we're talking about our jurisdiction. They note that our "jurisdiction has poorly developed mechanisms of accountability and oversight"

We're talking about the expenditure of, up to this point, \$1.5 billion in planned expenditures over the course of 30-year contracts. This is in the context of, again, poorly developed mechanisms of accountability and oversight. That is a strategy that is fraught with risks. Of course it is. If there is no accountability, then how can we be certain that we are getting the best value for the money that we are expending? If there's no oversight, then how can we be assured that the building we are paying an exceptionally large amount of money for – and one would argue quite easily that we are being overcharged for this. With no oversight how can we be assured that in 30 years' time when the building is handed back to us, that we are going to have a building that is truly functional?

A key point mentioned in this report is that we are locked into a 30-year contract. Let's put that in a little bit of context here. If we've been following along to some of the trends coming out of the economy, for example, but if one wanted to go into the Economics, Fiscal and Statistics Branch of the economics division of the Department of Finance, we would know that they had been projecting the problems associated with the declining population for years now. I would say for the better part of 20 years, we have been projecting that we have a declining population and at no point in time have we managed to rectify that situation.

In addition to that, we have unknown needs into the future. Plus, we are currently in an economic and fiscal crisis. Why do we think that it's a particularly good idea that we go further into the P3 model? In fact, the author of this report says it would be especially unwise for Newfoundland and Labrador to engage in any more P3s.

A little chat about some of the key findings. One of the things that they talk about here is there are many hidden dangers in using a P3 model. These hidden dangers, because we are engaged in 30-year contracts, we are engaged in these hidden dangers for 30 years. Now, that is an

inconceivably long time because it's well ahead of – just think 30 years from now is beyond our timeline for divesting ourselves in oil. It is beyond our *Advance 2030*, we're all in on oil objective. We are committing to paying for a hospital that we may not need in 30 years in the context of we have a declining population. This is not particularly well thought out, Mr. Chair.

If I could refer back to some of the discussion I had earlier in the day, when I was talking about the motivation for making government decisions. If the motivation for making government decisions is to simply take debt off the books, then we are not particularly well motivated and we will continue to make exceptionally poor decisions.

The report goes on to suggest that if we proceed to plan to use a P3 model for the current and upcoming projects, we're going to solve some immediate infrastructure issues, no doubt about it, but we will lock ourselves in to a long-term and more costly headache.

Again, I note we have jumped into the P3 world by committing \$1.5 billion in planned 30-year contracts. However, there is very little concrete information or insight into the decision-making process. I note the signed project agreements have not been released to the public.

Now, remember we are all keepers of the public purse and somewhere someone has decided that it is okay to sign off and commit ourselves to 30-year contracts and does not even release that contract to the people who are responsible for making sure that the public monies are accounted for. How is this conceivable?

Much of this information is kept secret on the basis that it would do undue harm to the competitive process. That tells me that we are putting the best interest of private companies, who, if you remember from the finance comment I made earlier, are charging us higher interest rates than we can get ourselves and a surcharge on top of that. We are putting their best interest ahead of our responsibility to the people who have elected us here to ensure that the monetary decisions we make are in their best interest.

Can we see how this is totally contradictory? We are not –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. COFFIN: Sure does and we all know how well that went.

What about the interest of residents? How can we be assured that they are embodied in these contracts? Oh my goodness, look how quickly the time flies when we're talking about alliteration.

When we talk about these projects, here's another little thing: The provincial government has chosen to spend \$5.1 million in public dollars on studies. Laudable that we choose to study something. I'm not quite sure how much of a study we get for \$5.1 million, but I know if I went to the university and grabbed a pile of professionals and offered them \$5.1 million, I'm sure I would get a very fine and comprehensive study. However, the \$5.1 million spent on these studies has not been released in full to the public. We spent \$5.1 million and we don't know what we got for it.

For fun, 88 per cent of this \$5.1 million paid – so we're coming in at about \$4 million – went all to a single consultant. That consultant was awarded that contract without a competitive process. Does this sound familiar to anyone? Sole sourcing million-dollar contracts without a competitive process? How does this show responsibility to the public purse? We did not get to see the studies that we just paid \$5 million for.

This is inconceivable; this is an inappropriate use of public funds. We get to pay out all this money to an individual that is chosen without a competitive process and we don't even get to see the results of their work. This is what we are using to form the decisions to spend \$1.5 billion in contracts.

Mr. Chair, I am only through the first two paragraphs of the summary of the key findings and already this is egregious. I look forward to the next opportunity for me to speak at length on public-private partnerships.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

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

Mr. Chair, I would like to now speak about another very important issue in the District of Harbour Main. I spoke earlier thanking the people of Harbour Main for electing me as their MHA. It's been approximately 17 months since my election. Being an MHA, as I indicated earlier – and I feel strongly about this – it is a great honour and also with it holds great responsibility and great duty.

Mr. Chair, when I meet with my constituents, when I hear from my constituents – I guess the most important thing that I've learned so far is that we have to listen to our constituents. It's very important to listen and to try to understand their concerns. That's a way for us – and it is for me – to find my voice. It gives me the leadership that I need to speak on behalf of my constituents.

The first issue that I'd like to speak about now relates to seniors, specifically low-income seniors. I spoke about this issue last week, Mr. Chair; actually, I spoke about this in a petition. I had been hearing from a couple of my seniors in the last preceding two or three weeks. What I heard was quite disturbing. It was very troubling to me.

I heard from one man and his family, a 70-year-old man who had to have 10 extractions. He wasn't enrolled in the plan. He was a low-income senior; he had worked his entire life and now was living on less than \$20,000 a year. He was finding it difficult to pay bills; he was finding it difficult to buy groceries without the added expense of dental work.

His family were trying their best to assist him and to support him as much as they could. They were very active and very involved in trying to assist their father, but they struggled and were very saddened by what they would have to see. They would watch him, the tears rolling down his face with pain. He'd actually been continuously on antibiotics for the condition that he had in his mouth with respect to his teeth. There was no help, Mr. Chair. He was one

example of many that are falling through the cracks with respect to the lack of dental care. I know that there is a program. We know that there is a program, I'm not disputing that, but what I'm saying is that there are people like this 70-year-old gentleman that I have spoken to and his family.

Another 67-year-old that I had spoken to indicated that he had to have 19 extractions. He did manage to get the money together by borrowing it. He had to borrow the money. It was \$2,750 and he did have the procedure eventually completed. Actually he was having the procedure completed on the 29th of this month. Mr. Chair, he was on a limited income of approximately \$1,100 per month. These are two real cases in my district. These are individuals that really have been suffering, that really have been falling through the cracks.

I wanted to talk about this lack of an adequate dental care plan. Mr. Chair, I want to point out that there are people, not only in my rural district but also in urban areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, who are doing without the accessible, affordable dental care that they need.

I also pointed out that there have been studies that have been completed, Mr. Chair. I referenced one study that has been completed by the Ontario government that has shown that having no public dental care has cost the government. It costs the government and it costs the health care system millions and millions of dollars in the long term, but when we have short-sighted goals or short-sighted objectives, we lose sight of that.

Why, when we look at – instead of going for regular dental checkups and treatment, people end up in our doctors' offices, they end up in our emergency rooms. They end up even as hospital admissions due to severe dental and oral health issues that occur. Then we see pain and infections that result. We also are very well aware that serious dental and oral health issues can and do affect a person's overall health. That's not disputed; that's a fact. We know overall health – physically, emotionally and mentally – is impacted when we do not have proper dental health care.

Maybe, Mr. Chair, the government does save money in the short term they're going to say. I raised this issue and one of my colleagues as well had raised this previously. It was the Member for Mount Pearl North. He has raised this issue with respect to dental care for seniors and low-income people in the past.

I recall reading the *Hansard* and the response by the Minister of Health. His response was: We're in the middle of the pack in terms of provinces. He also said that we don't have the fiscal ability; we're in fiscal crisis. We all know that times are tough and this is a very difficult time, but saving money in the short term by eliminating this adult basic dental program costs so much, much, much more in the long term by not having adequate dental care.

In addition to all of these things that it costs – the overall physical, emotional and mental health of our seniors – you know what, they feel forgotten and I'll tell you why. After I presented last Thursday, I received a call from a person, a senior, who heard the petition. He heard the response from the Minister of Health and he said: The minister said to you that you were being selective; he was being selective. After I heard what he said I went to try to find if there were other ways to appeal and to go. There is nowhere for me to go. He said to me he was misleading to people like me because the individual, the senior, went to look and find what he could access and there was nothing for him. He was really frustrated and very disappointed about that, and angry, too. He said: The current government has forgotten about us seniors.

I found that really troubling, Mr. Chair, because our seniors, as has been stated by so many of us, have given so much. Many of them have worked all their lives, they're struggling to make ends meet and they're not being heard. Hopefully we can bring some further attention to this issue for our most vulnerable population, our seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Earlier, my former student and the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans complimented me on being a passionate teacher. I thank him for that. I can't say I was the best of teachers. I would say that I plodded along and I did my best at the job, no doubt about it. I would say that the Member probably made it to where he is in spite of me; nevertheless, I will say that.

I do thank him for that because part of it is as a teacher you get to see your students later on when they're still calling you Sir or Mr. Dinn or whatever else. It takes a little while to break out of that habit, but it's always good to see your students, how they turned out, where they've gone and the amazing things that they've done, far exceeding what any teacher could hope in many cases.

The Member for Cape St. Francis talked about – like my focus would be on teachers and that the focus needs to be on students. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, the focus of every teacher is the student. That is the centre of their life, in many cases, well beyond the school day.

I can tell you that what I look for is – and I said this, the teaching conditions of teachers are the learning conditions of students. What I want for teachers and students is basically to get through this year safely, to get through this year mentally and physically healthy and intact. Spend what we need to get through this year safely, invest the money, put the resources in place and get there basically without burning out. That's the key thing right now. That's what it's been about.

Let's face it; this is an unprecedented year that we have to get through. That's been the basis of everything that I fought for and take liberty – not only I, but also, Mr. Chair, you in your capacity as Education critic, we both have fought for that. We've met with the minister, we brought suggestions to him. We've done it across party lines for the one purpose here because we both come from the school system. We both know the realities of the school system even in a year that didn't have COVID and we know the challenges that are there in starting it up and we know the resource deficits that can take place, that are there.

I hadn't planned to speak, of course, until – in raising these questions, I get accused of wanting students to have half a school year, for students basically going on a rotational basis. That was taken out of context. Because when the Member for Bonavista and I approached the minister, we knew there were two weeks left before school. The busing had not been resolved. It was still going to leave thousands of students without a bus. It was going to be disruptive to parents and to students. It was also going to put an enormous amount of pressure on schools when they were also trying to get used to the new COVID-19 regulations.

The comment we had suggested at this time, at least for September, why don't we try a rotational or a shift system until we can get the bus situation resolved. Here's the thing, no one need go without a bus. That was the key thing. No one would have to worry about not having a seat on a bus. Administrators would not have to try to figure who gets on a bus and who doesn't. Instead, I can think of principals who spent two days individually emailing parents about if they didn't get on the bus this year and what they need to do. They tied up valuable human resources in that administrative duty.

It wasn't about half a year; it was about how do we get through this. I thought it was a pretty constructive approach. Until we do a few things, we get the busing situation solved, which should have been resolved long before that, so that the new measures that were in place, teachers and schools and parents and students had an opportunity to get used to the system and the new normal, such as it was. That's where that idea came from.

The minister asked for ideas, we gave them. Unfortunately, that wasn't one of them that met with – I don't know what the reason was, but it would have saved a lot of anxiety for a lot of people. It would have given everyone time to adjust. That's where that idea came from.

Then, to be told that I'm going madly in pursuit of all problems. I tell you, I don't have to look far. If I was looking for problems and there were none there, I wouldn't have anything to report, would I? But the fact is, as I've already pointed out, problems do exist, and if problems don't

come to the forefront, Mr. Chair, they will not be resolved.

I can tell you that it's always been about resources. I'm going to go back to full-day kindergarten, which I supported. I think it's a fantastic idea, but at the time it was brought in, Mr. Chair, it was brought in on the backs of the rest of the system: 140-odd teachers or so were removed from the system and they were put back into the full-day kindergarten. I also saw, when you have class size that's adequate, how well full-day kindergarten, play-based learning can work.

I remember visiting a school – and that was most of my job as NLTA president, to visit schools. I didn't just talk to the officials; I went to the schools. I spoke to teachers. I spoke to the administrators, the school councils, the teachers, to find out what's going on there, and parents, too.

I remember in this one kindergarten class – in contrast, a full-day kindergarten class in town and in this small classroom in Central Newfoundland – with this teacher in Central Newfoundland. We were talking. I said: How are you finding the full-day kindergarten, the play-based learning? She had nine students, but what was fascinating to me is that a student came up to her and asked her a question. She said, did you see that? How he learned that concept. He had that concept nailed down. Right off the bat, she could put that down. That was an evaluation. It wasn't a formal test, Mr. Chair, but right there she could say this child had achieved an outcome.

That's what you can accomplish in a classroom that's small and has a ratio small enough so that teachers can actually do that intensive one-on-one, because not all children come with the privilege that my grandchildren, that my children had, where they had the resources they needed. Not all children come with a full stomach. Not all children come adequately clothed. Not all children know where they're going to stay that night, especially if they've been kicked out of their homes or if they're dealing with violence and so on and so forth. I can tell you that.

To me, teachers want more than a letter from a minister of Education saying how great a job they're doing. They want to see the resources they have so that they can do their job, so they can take care of the children and their needs. I can tell you that's been the primary function of any teachers, and I'm sure the Chair would know this. Teachers do so much in the school system, from organizing breakfasts for their students, the breakfast program or the school lunch program. Not because they have to. It's not even in their contract. Actually, it says you don't have to. It's a voluntary activity.

What they do is they see a need and they reach out and they try to resolve it. If that means they have to have a fundraiser to get some extra for the students, they'll do it. If it means that you have to go out and spend your precious time, I'm going to pick up all the supplies I need or we need for a school breakfast program or a school lunch program, or to give that little extra then we're doing to do it.

It's not just a job. I can tell you that from my own time. I never thought of my teaching profession as a job. I loved it. I enjoyed it. I don't think there was ever a day that I can say I went to school thinking: Holy crap, when will 3 o'clock come? I've never had that experience.

When my daughter was trying to decide about teaching, I said: Go into it because you want to. It will eat you alive if you don't love working with children or if you don't love working with people. But I can tell you the rewards: it's not the income; it's not the salary; it's not the two months but I can tell you when you see a child succeed, when you see them grasp a concept, when 30 years down the road you find out you made a difference, that's gold. Give teachers the resources they need.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I get an opportunity to speak again in the House and I was hoping the Minister of Transportation was going to be here so I could have another –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. WAKEHAM: Oh, good. I wanted to have another chance to chat with him. Actually, it's all good because earlier today he talked about the valuable work that the employees of the Transportation and Infrastructure Department do and I just want to talk about the great work that the employees in Transportation and Infrastructure do in my district.

I have a great relationship with the employees in Transportation and Infrastructure in my district. They do a really valuable job and it's a tough job. But I do want to even put forward a little recommendation coming from the staff on where they see there's an opportunity to perhaps use money more efficiently. That has to do with the fact about the number of actual supervisors that are employed directly in that particular depot.

In fact, if you were take an analysis – and I challenge the minister to do this – turn around and look at how much money you're spending on overtime and callbacks, when it relates to the current supervisors that we have out there, and do an analysis to see if it's possible to say that maybe if we brought someone back in the wintertime on a temporary basis to be able to help handle the pressures that they get – I'm sure the former minister probably got loads of calls about snow clearing. These people, the territory that they have to cover and the amount of calls they get, I'm just thinking that there may be an opportunity to provide a service in a more efficient way and perhaps, at the end of the day, even save a little bit of money. I mean, that's what we're all about. Today, I mean, this bill is about a billion-dollar borrowing.

I also want to talk about in the Estimates we talked a little bit about shared services. The former minister of Finance talked about that a lot. Didn't see a lot of what actually was happening, but talked about it a lot. I have an interest in that and I think there are tremendous opportunities there for government wide – I don't think we need to wait for a team or a task force to expand on that. I know in the Estimates I was promised that there would be a report

come back to see actually what has been implemented to date and where we are with it. I remember when I was involved in that process years ago, the reassurances that we gave to people throughout the entire province, this wasn't about packing people up and putting them in a DRL bus and moving them all into Mount Pearl somewhere. It was about people being able to work from their current locations but doing work more efficiently.

For example, in health care we've had buyers that would buy the full alphabet. They would be buying from A to Z. Every single different health authority was doing that. I think it might be changed now. I'm not sure. That's why I'm looking forward to the update. But the concept of simply having someone become a content expert, so they buy A to C and D to F, they can do that for the entire province, no matter where they're located. It's more of a virtual headquarters as opposed to needing to have a physical building and putting everybody or relocate everybody.

When we think about 500,000 of us and we have all of these separate payroll systems. I mean, government pays the school board that pays the teachers, yet we have four health authorities with four separate payroll systems. We have the college – I'm not sure if the college is on the government system or not, but the university has a separate system and a lot of other ABCs do. Those types of changes don't impact the delivery of services. That's the key. We don't want to talk about how we take away the front lines; we talk about how we do back of office and consolidate.

I know in New Brunswick some years ago they went to a different model and they moved towards that big concept, created their own corporation, own department. I think it even has its own minister. I don't know where that is and I don't know enough about it to be able to say how effective it has been but it's been done.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. WAKEHAM: New Brunswick.

They kind of took three different groups and put them together. It requires some investment in technology but it's clearly an opportunity that

exists for our province that as we said and as I alluded to, I think there's been some work done on it. I just don't know the full extent of that work but I think it's something that I think we could do.

I also wanted to sing a song, similar to what the deputy minister was quoting from the last time from the Barenaked Ladies that said, "If I Had \$1,000,000." Now if I had a million dollars –

AN HON. MEMBER: Sing it.

MR. WAKEHAM: I don't think I'll sing it. I don't think I'd want to spend it on a report. I'd want to fix my road in Cold Brook. That would only take \$200,000 of it and I'd still have \$800,000. I'd want to look at that issue with erosion, and I'm looking down at the Minister of Municipalities right now, and say I'd want to take a look at that gentleman whose house is about to fall into the ocean to see what we might be able to do there. Maybe I'd spend a couple of thousand on that one. Might cost me \$10,000 or \$20,000 on that one.

I know government is all about making choices and there are tough choices to make but at the end of the day the real choice is how do we help the people of the province and how do we invest in the people of the province? How do we make their lives better?

My colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans alluded to the locked-in pension and I think all of us can agree that there's a serious issue out there and we need to try to find a way to move that forward. If that means that we have to stay extra in November to get that done, to get that legislation in place, then I think we're all prepared to do it. I know the minister alluded to it. She's not here now but she had alluded to being able to try to move that forward. I'm hoping we can do that and try to figure out a way of finding a way to do some of that and free up some opportunities for people to get on with that.

In my next segment, depending on how far we go tonight, I'll have an opportunity to help you and help the Minister of Industry and Energy express his frustration with the federal government and get a little bit of that out on the floor tonight, hopefully, so he can talk about it.

The Premier says that \$320 million is just the start. I think we all agree that it's not enough.

I want to say don't be afraid to show that; don't be afraid to be upset with the federal government. At the end of the day, when you look at the billions of dollars that are being given out in other ways, yes, we recognize the \$320 million is going to be put to use, but don't be afraid to be upset with them. If they can give \$200 million to a casino in Ontario, then they had better step up and find a different way of giving us a little bit more. When you see over a million dollars – or almost a billion dollars – going to a plant remake, then I think we could do with a little more.

That's not to be critical but that's to say, you guys, get up there and give it to them because we need you to give it to them. We need you to be fighting to say that's not enough. We need to find different ways. We appreciate everything that's being done, it's a hard job, but we need to fight for more and we have to find a way to do that. I look forward to being involved in that. Hopefully, we can help somewhere along the way, as a House of Assembly, as a bunch of people sitting here, that we all can find a way to put forward our case to the federal government to say, yes, it's a good start. I think the Premier alluded to that and I will keep him to that, that it is only a start.

Getting his federal counterparts to agree that it's only a start is a challenge, but I have no doubt that people on that side are just as much concerned about our oil and gas as the people are on this side. We all share that, we want to fight for that and we will find a way to do it. Whatever we have to do to make that happen, well, let's do it.

The Minister of Transportation is here now. Minister, I was just talking about the road in Cold Brook.

AN HON. MEMBER: He was listening.

MR. WAKEHAM: Okay, he was listening.

MR. BRAGG: (Inaudible.)

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Minister. Already paved, it needs to be resurfaced.

MR. BRAGG: (Inaudible.)

MR. WAKEHAM: Right, it needs to be resurfaced – \$200,000.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, my time is up. I'll conclude.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

I appreciate the chance to speak here once again. Again, I want to thank the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District for giving me the opportunity to represent them. They are constantly supporting me. I thank the people from across the province for supporting me.

I've gotten hundreds of messages from people out in Western Canada who support me as well, because they see the passion that I have. I come from that so I know what it's like. I know first-hand what it's like. I know it seems I can get heated or passionate sometimes here or out and about. I guarantee you it comes from the heart. I'm only trying to do what's best for the province, like the rest are trying to do here as well.

Also, Mr. Chair, if I may thank the essential workers that, once again, helped us through the pandemic, especially those ones that are on the Dominion picket line late at night, having their fires, staying out in the cold, staying out in the rain. That's 1,500 people that are displaced now getting their strike pay. They just want to go back to work.

My heart goes out to them as they're trying to find their way through this. I pray to God that some sort of conclusion comes of this soon so they can get back to work. I know that's what they want as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: It's horrible. They're just trying to do their thing.

Mr. Chair, the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor is supposed to be the first

community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're hoping that it's going to see some traction and open up here in the new year. We have some hope. It's going to give a lot of families a chance to be with their loved ones as they die with dignity.

I'm sure we all know somebody or have had somebody that died without dignity. I know, myself, I lost my grandmother in 2014. She died on the cluttered bedroom floor of her house because there was no space at the hospital for her, so they had to keep her home.

This hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor is going to be state of the art. The building is already there; they just need the renovations. You're going to be able to bring your pets in there, your family members. There are going to be bedrooms off to the side for your family members to stay in and stay with you. Pictures, colours, pillows, blankets: It's supposed to help you in your last 30 days so you can move on to the next stage of wherever that may and give people a really comfortable death with dignity. Also, their families will have some closure as well. We're really happy about that.

The timber rights throughout Central Newfoundland, we've been cutting wood in there for over a hundred years. I revert to John Shearing, a man 63 years old, been cutting wood since he was six years old and can't get the permits that he wants, but he has to watch 20 truckloads of wood pass by each day. I have faith in the new minister that took on this role that he's going to work with myself and the Member for Exploits to hopefully come up with some sort of plan for these people that are there.

If you look at the proportion of wood that they want to cut compared to what's being cut out there, it's a fraction. Their whole world has been turned upside down since Abitibi has left, but they should still be able to cut their wood as well. I'm hoping to meet with the minister and come up with some sort of action plan that will see them be able to cut their wood like their ancestors did and so on and so forth.

There are some good things happening throughout my district. Marathon Gold are right on. Matt Manson, CEO and president – absolutely fantastic. I know a lot of work has

gone into it. It's going to be great for our area. It's going to bring 460 jobs. We're very excited about that.

Already this company has given tens of thousands of dollars to the small communities and helped them with their infrastructure plans. There has been a bridge up there for snowmobiles that they fixed up for them. They asked each and every individual municipality for a plan that they want to see happen from Marathon Gold – what do they want from Marathon Gold.

Of course, the number one thing on that are local jobs. I've talked to Matt Manson, the CEO and president there, and he's assured me that yes, they will be all local jobs. That's absolutely fantastic. We're looking forward to a 13-year mine life and three million ounces of gold. Gold is up over \$1,900 an ounce again today, so that's a great thing for my area, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District, and for the province as a whole. We're very happy about that. We're looking forward to it.

There is some work that needs to be done on the roads up there throughout the Buchans Highway and whatnot. If we're going to be bringing in big players we want to make sure that we have the infrastructure to support what they want to do up there, because we don't want anybody to get turned away or whatnot. They seem to be quite happy with the place and the people that are up there. I talked to the mayors – every single mayor in my district – on a monthly basis, if not every couple of weeks. I keep in contact with them and they're happy with what's going on up there too. That is one great thing that's happening in my district and we hope that mine life gets extended. We are truly thankful that's going to happen up there for us.

We're talking about trying to get some money back in the coffers of the families. The school trips that were cancelled, upon the government's request, of course – and it was the right thing to do – that was six, seven months ago. These families haven't seen a dime back yet. These families are still waiting on their money to come back from Explorica.

I was hoping that the government would have a little bit more hands-on approach to going after

Explorica, going after the insurance company and trying to get this money back for these people. If it were me personally, I would say: Explorica, either step up or it's going to be tough to do business in this province when things get back to normal I can tell you that. The right thing to do is give these parents and these families their money back. There are parents with two kids that are waiting for \$6,000 to come back in their pockets that they spent. That's just simply not right. It's not right at all. That's some money now that they could definitely use.

A little bit of innovation going on in my district. Mike Goodyear, he owns the funeral homes in Central Newfoundland. He is trying to bring in a new system, it would be the first system that's east of Quebec, it's called alkaline hydrolysis. What that does, basically, is it's a chemical process to cremate the bodies of the dead. What it does, basically, is every cremation that happens puts 525 pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere. If we're looking for a greener economy here, what better way to look at this innovation, maybe, and bring it in? Like I say, it's gone across Canada now into quite a few places. I would invite anybody to take a look if you want, it's called alkaline hydrolysis. It's supposed to be a pretty good system and, like I say, if we're looking for a little bit of a greener planet, that's something that we can do.

Over the past year and a half, I've truly enjoyed my job and I've truly enjoyed working with the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. They're a great bunch. They have accepted me as their MHA. I do the best work that I can and they know I do. I'll continue to do the best work that I can. I leave myself as accessible as I can possibly be and I'm always around. I enjoy talking to the people and seniors.

I got to say one thing about the young people, the high school students, I think that we got to talk to them more. These high school students are some of the smartest people I've ever met and they teach me a lot of stuff. They are the future of this province. Right now, Newfoundland and Labrador is leased to us, we're renting Newfoundland and Labrador from them.

If I was renting an apartment I wouldn't destroy it and try to give it back to the landlord. So I want to make sure that when we're all done here and our time has come and gone, when these young people get Newfoundland and Labrador it's in a lot better shape than it is right now. That's one hope that I have for my son Declan, who's 15, and my other son Xander, who's 13. They're two good boys and two smart boys. I want to make sure that we leave a good place for them.

I'll just leave on one thing, Mr. Chair. We banter back and forth all day, we have fun with it and it gets a little bit heated sometimes. There's not one person in this House of Assembly that I don't like and I don't respect. I have respect and I love everybody here. I know that everybody is trying to do their best. The biggest problem I have with the current government is the lack of, what I call, action when it comes to the federal government in Ottawa. We have a federal Resources minister that has done nothing, or very little to nothing.

Mr. Chair, I've had to fight for everything my whole life and I mean literally fight. I grew up on the rigs. I used to be a paramedic and firefighter as well. Nobody has given me a thing in life. I've always had to go get it myself. There are times I had to fight, and when I say fight, I mean tooth and nail fight. Sometimes that's what has to be done, so when I look across and I see that we've been talking to the federal government; we're trying. When they say that the squeaky wheel gets the grease sort of thing, those are true words. We need to speak up more.

When I say get up to Ottawa, we need to get up there and talk to the prime minister and tell him this is not good enough; \$320 million, it's fantastic money; it's only going to go so far. You see the billions come out, like my colleague has said, to the rest of Canada; b'ys, we have to fight tooth and nail. Everybody has to be on the same page. If we're silent and if we stay status quo, what you see is what you get, and that's all it's going to be.

I'm sorry if I get a little bit passionate sometimes and I joust back and forth, but I have nothing but love for everybody here. I just want to make sure we're on all the same page and we're all going to get what we need for this

province. We all have to dig, all 40 of us, and let them know that this is not good enough and we will not be pushed off to sea. We are a province in the greatest country in the world and we need to fight for what we have to get.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a privilege to speak again. I'd be remiss if I didn't start speaking about the mining industry and how important it is to the provincial economy and how important it is to my district especially. I know some other Members are historically and getting back into it. It's good to see all the gold mining that's going on in Central. That's absolutely fantastic. Of all the minerals in the world, probably the most sought after is gold. It's great to see quite the abundance of it in Central.

It's an opportunity. It's a good-paying job. It's a very labour-intensive job. Statistically, it's one of the jobs that actually employs the most people through capital and that. If you're looking to hire a lot people, the mining industry is a great way for long-term, sustainable jobs – very good-paying jobs. I came out of the mining industry and it's a very rewarding career. It's great that we have that opportunity in this province.

It's a changing industry, like I alluded to before, when it comes to technology. We have the bright minds in people in this province to actually take the opportunities that we have from our academia, from the university and the college, and take that opportunity and apply it into the mining industry. That's where we need to continue to put a lot of investment, time and energy, into our research and development as we move and transition into a more technology-based mining industry.

There are a lot of players in the game. There's a lot of opportunity there. I encourage this government to take the opportunities to invest in the mining industry, invest in the technology side of it. We have a lot of existing mines that

are underutilized that we can make investments and take these opportunities to employ more people.

I know in some cases, with some of the transitioning into more technology-based and more innovation stuff, sometimes the mining industry thinks that they are going to reduce some labour costs, but turn around and end up having to hire more people because that technology does need a skill set that is not currently existing in the industry. Now we're seeing that they make a motion towards some automation or towards some new and improved technology in the mining process and turn around and actually hire extra people because of this change.

We are in a new world but we're still requiring a similar amount of base when it comes to employment. What I'd like to see in the future is more emphasis on investments in the development of technology in the mining industry. With that actually comes another issue that we seem to face, the issue around power supply and the need for more electricity for the mining industry.

It's great to see that with this province we have the capacity to make sure that we reduce the amount of carbon that we burn by offsetting it with the use of electricity because we do have an abundance of it. We have a massive abundance of electricity in Labrador and eventually, with all the flaws corrected, we'll see that the Island will be able to access some of this.

I encourage the government to put the investments into connecting these mines to the grid so that we can reduce our carbon footprint in the mining industry and we move towards a more green mining industry where we utilize the power of hydroelectricity versus burning bunker and diesel. That's an encouragement I make because we have the power here, let's use it for our own means.

I know my colleagues there as well have talked about secondary and tertiary processing. The ability to take the minerals that we actually mine out of the ground and make a finished product or semi-finished product out of it so that we have the edge in the market; we take our own resources and maximize the potential of what we

can do with it. I know I probably won't see it tomorrow or the next day, to see a blast furnace somewhere on the Island or in Labrador, but let's explore all options that we have when it comes to secondary and tertiary processing in the mineral market.

When you have the likes of Tesla and all those big players kind of coming and sniffing around the industry and stuff now, maybe we can convince them to do secondary and tertiary processing before those minerals leave our province. Let's take these opportunities and when life gives you lemons, let's make lemonade. Maybe we can see what we can do when it comes to these extra processing steps with our minerals in this province.

As passionate as we are as a province, we like to purchase our own goods, so I'm sure everyone in this province would love to have a gold necklace made from gold from Central Newfoundland. This is what we need, to continue to look at all options that are there when it comes to secondary and tertiary processing. I'm sure we had many visions in the past when we were hauling out billions of tons of iron ore out of Labrador West. I'm sure it was brought to the former minister's attention sometime: Why don't we have a blast furnace?

It's all about markets, too, but we do have other minerals than iron: nickel, copper, zinc, lithium, rare earths, even right down to granites and marbles and all that stuff. We should maximize on everything we have and we should maximize on the potential. If we can convince at least one company just to stay – I want to do secondary or tertiary processing in the province – that's one victory. That's jobs. That's well-paying jobs that someone can hang their hat on.

We need to keep always looking at what potentials are around and make sure that we make the right infrastructure investments. Sometimes it's not always necessarily writing a blank cheque to a company; sometimes it's a power line here, a road there, a bridge over a brook. These are sometimes the little, small things that make a bigger difference at the end of the day when it comes to encouraging sustainable development in our province. Unfortunately, minerals don't grow back, but maximize the potential of what we have now

before they're all gone and we say, oh shucks, maybe we should've put that goldsmith in or something like that.

Even small investments can lead to a big victory at the end of the day. We need to make sure we see where we're coming from and we see where we're going and that we maximize the potential of our minerals before they leave our shores. That's a thing we would like to see more of.

I remember my dad saying many times about all of the protests when they were going to build a pellet plant in Quebec versus one in Labrador. That was a very contentious thing, but that's a primary processing that – if you look at the pelletization now, that's 300, 400 jobs alone in Labrador West. It's just pelletizing ore. Even one pelletizing machine not built in Labrador versus over in Quebec, that's jobs that were never made or never lost. That's a thing that we need to make sure we have the opportunities, we have the resources and the infrastructure because when it comes to mining, infrastructure is king.

We need to make sure that we make these investments when the opportunity arises so we can maximize job potential, but also maximize production potential and make sure that goods and services that leave this province are maximized to the benefit of our people. We have a lot of potential. We have a lot of smart ideas. We have a lot of smart people around this province and a lot of very intelligent people, even in this room. So we want to make sure we seize the day, seize the potential and seize the opportunities of what's around.

It's nice to see that the mining industry continues to make investments and make announcements. We still have prospectors and junior miners scouring every rock and cliff and cave here in the province to make sure that we know what we have in the ground and where it is. So one day we'll see it, and that's good.

As a famous poet and doctor once said: Thy splendid task shall be done. Our splendid task is to seize every opportunity that our province has for its people and maximize it for the benefit of the people of this province, because that is our task at the end of the day. It's the task to make sure people are well employed, looked after and we are here for everybody. A good paying job

and a rewarding job is something we should give to every person we can and make sure we have an abundance of it to retain people because out-migration is probably the biggest pitfall we have right now.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Before I get into my comments, congratulations on running a tight ship here tonight. I appreciate the order you've brought to the House.

I guess what I'm going to do is just provide a few comments. Ten minutes seems like a long time sometimes and sometimes it does not seem long enough. I've made a bunch of notes here. The goal I have is just to – again, I'm going to try my best to provide a coherent narrative of where we are and sort of what I've taken out of this. I doubt very highly there's anybody watching right now, but at the same time we all know that everything we say is recorded in *Hansard* and everything – you put it out there and that's why sometimes you always try to be careful.

One of the reasons I'm here is to explain, we are here debating Bill 47, which is the amendment to the Loan Act, which I would point out to those watching is an annual bill. It comes with the budget talking about the authorization for loans, basically. I can say, to provide some more context, I'm one of the few in the House that I have had the opportunity to sit on both sides of the House. I've had an opportunity to sit in Cabinet, to sit here, to answer questions, to ask questions, to debate, to do all this. I've been through a few of these now. Not as many as the Minister of Education but a few. So I fully understand what it's like to sit and to ask questions and to debate bills.

It was funny because tonight, actually, I stepped out for a moment and was talking to a person. They said: Where are you? I said: We're in the House. Why are you in the House? I said: We're

still debating a bill that goes with the budget. He said: Why are you debating that? I thought everybody voted on the budget. I said: We have. They said: Didn't everybody vote in favour of the budget? I said: Yes, everybody has voted in favour of the budget. Why are you still there? To this person I said: That's the question that I cannot answer, I don't know.

I've had an opportunity to look at this. I've also sat on that side and there have been different times over the course of debate where you hold up a bill, you hold up progress, you try to delay a bill for various reasons because you wanted to effect change, because you want to add something to it, to delete something from it or to not see it become law or to pass. The process for that is called a filibuster.

We haven't seen filibusters like we used to but when I think about the process that we're here tonight, this is a bill that everybody is going to vote in favour of. This is a budget that, for the first time I've ever seen, everybody has voted in favour of it unanimously. The reason I say all this is to provide context for those that may read these comments.

We're here now and I don't say there's anybody here that's sat through a longer debate. There's a few of us. We've been through some long debates. It's not that, but I answered the question for that person. It's 11 at night and we've been debating Bill 47 for five hours. A bill for which there will be no amendment. A bill for a budget that has already passed unanimously. A bill that will not be changed and will be supported unanimously.

The reason that I bring all this up is because I can tell you what does not get done when you're here debating this. If there was a cogent reason advanced as to why we were here, I'd say that's what we're here to do; we're here to discuss or to debate. But like any money bill – this is what they call a money bill, meaning you can talk about anything – people have an opportunity to talk about a multitude of things.

We've heard Members of the Opposition talk about many things. I guess that's one of the things I want to point out, the contrast, sometimes, in the comments that I see. I reference my friend from Grand Falls-Windsor

who speaks very passionately about oil and gas. The one comment I took out of his speech tonight was he said we all have to be on the same page. To that, I concur; I absolutely agree with everything that he says when we talk about being on the same page.

At the same time we talk about oil and gas, I can tell you there was no work being done – unable to engage in a conversation with Suncor tonight, unable to engage in a conversation with Husky, unable to engage in the work in the department with the staff around Come By Chance. The reason I come back to the same page part is that during the debate I've heard various contrasts from Members opposite. So I'll point out just a couple to show that we're all on the same page. I'll point out to my friend from Grand Falls-Windsor there was no contrast from you, there was no contrast from the Member.

I come to one thing. I've heard literally here in this debate tonight one Member for Mount Pearl North say we are over paving roads in this province. Why should we pave rural roads that have no future? That is a comment that is in *Hansard*. I look around this room and I see a lot of us that live in rural areas; in fact, we've heard multiple times during Question Period and in various of forms of debate that there's not enough paving done. Yet there's a Member in the caucus who says there's too much paving done.

Now, at the same time, during this debate tonight, right after that, the Member for Stephenville said I need Cold Brook paved. What I'm saying is that there's a contrast during this debate. We're talking about being on the same page, we're talking about trying to progress to move things through this filibuster, yet in this one debate we've seen opposite sides on just that one issue.

I'll refer to another one: Multiple Members on the other side have let me know in no uncertain terms their support for the oil and gas industry. They've made that clear. That's no secret and we support that. I've heard multiple Members talk about we need to find a way to support, we need to go after Ottawa or we need to do this, we need to invest.

I point out that at the same time – this, I will say, did not come from today's debate; it came from yesterday's – a Member for the PC caucus said that we shouldn't take dollars out of the oil business and put it back in the oil business. That's not diversification. We should be starting new sectors. At the same time that I've heard the Leader of the PCs say the \$320 million should be spent right on Husky, I've heard other Members say \$320 million should be spent on Come By Chance. Now I see other Members saying the money should go towards diversification because putting money back into oil is not diversification.

Again, the question I ask you, Mr. Chair, is that we're here talking about – and I've already told you that I concur with the point made by my friend that we're all on the same page, but clearly there are a lot of different pages going on there. It brings me back to the bigger point. The bigger point is that we are here – and I am all for free-flowing debate and exchange of ideas. But right now what we are doing – the definition of filibuster is to hold up progress – is we are holding up progress of issues and policies that we want to advance for the betterment of this province. I have yet to hear a single reason as to why we should do that. I've yet to hear the reason as to why we would sit here and debate a bill for a budget that was unanimously supported, just so they don't feel left out.

I've heard the Leader of the NDP, at the same time that she's concurring and standing up and supporting the budget, uses the term "egregious." I say, Mr. Chair, that you can't have it both ways. You can't stand up and say this is an egregious budget and we question all your policies as a government; we think you need to change – again, as the Member for Mount Pearl North said, we need a change in governance and there's irresponsibility going on over there – and then stand in your place and support the budgetary policy of the government.

I come back because I have a minute left, and I say to the person I was speaking to tonight: Yes, I don't know why I am still here doing this. What I can tell you is that I concur with a lot of what the Members opposite say about we need to find ways to work on this industry because we all have these constituents right now that are going through a tough time. I'm there, I want to

do that as well and, thankfully, I'm able to email them some while I'm here.

Right now, I would be interested if one of my colleagues on the other side could tell me: Why are we here involved in a filibuster on a budget that's been supported and why are we not working on something that might further the interests that benefit all of our constituents?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I'm going to answer the hon. Member's question.

I'm here to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: – and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Chair, I applaud the Member for his comments a few minutes ago, but I tell you, I sat through filibusters. This is not a filibuster. This is a debate. We're in a debate. Filibusters are over. Filibusters were when we were here all night long. I sat here with your dad, I sat here with three Members of the Liberal Party and I applauded them for what they did because they stayed here all night long and they kept to the point.

We're here tonight to let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know that we care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: We care about people losing their homes. We care about seniors that are locked in their homes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: We care about what students have done in this province.

I'll tell the hon. Member what we're here for and I'll gladly tell him. We're here to do the best job we can for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we're going to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I listened to my colleagues tonight and I listened to everyone on this side of the House. You on that side of the House have the opportunity. I'm sorry if you feel bad about sitting in your seats at 12 o'clock because I do not. I will sit here all day and all night for the people of Newfoundland to get their points across, what their concerns are. That's what we're doing here tonight.

Every Member on this side of the House tonight spoke about their constituents. We're in a very difficult time and we know it. We go through budgets – yes, we all agreed to this budget. We agreed to this budget because probably two-thirds of it was already passed and we're in a situation where we can't be holding up paying people the money that they deserve in the public service. So that's why we're agreeing to it.

Do we agree with everything in this budget? No. Do we want to see things changed in this budget? Yes, we do, but we want to be able to express our opinions. We want to be able to talk for the constituents in Cape St. Francis, the constituents in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. You did a great job tonight and so did every Member here.

We want to talk about education, like the Member for St. John's Centre did, talk about teachers. I spoke earlier today. I spoke about how lucky we are to live in this province, how we have seniors out there that are paying the price for not being able to go to a bingo or go to a chicken dinner or whatever they do. I spoke here tonight for my constituents. Everyone in this House spoke of their constituents and that's what we're doing.

I'm going to talk a little bit now about essential workers. Who before this pandemic knew that a person that worked at Sobeys, Dominion, Walmart and those places were essential workers? I have to be honest with you. I didn't consider them essential workers. Do I now? Yes, I do.

Do I support the people around the picket lines at Dominion because they want to get paid a fair wage and don't want the \$2 that was taken? They deserved it. We're still in a pandemic; I don't know why they're not getting their \$2 that they were getting all along. Do I support them? I do. Do you know why I support them? Because they went to work. A lot of them did go to work when it was hard times here and people had no idea what was going to happen. Nobody had any idea of how this was going to go out, how people were going to be affected.

Down in the United States, we're after seeing hundreds of thousands of people die. We're very fortunate in this province; we had a couple of people that died – very unfortunate for those families. But I tell you, I'm very proud of what our essential workers have done. I'm very proud that I can sit in the House of Assembly at 11:13 in the night and give them thanks. I'll sit here every day and thank them for what they did. No matter if it's 2 in the morning or it's 10 in the morning, it doesn't make any difference. I'll sit here for them because that's what we're here for. We're here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm sorry to the hon. minister who just got up and thought this was a waste of time. I don't think it's a waste of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I'm the longest sitting Member on this side. A couple of Members here have been here longer than I have. I've been here through filibusters and they've worked. I was here in 2016 when we sat all night long to try to stop the closure of libraries in this province –

AN HON. MEMBER: The levy.

MR. K. PARSONS: – and the levy. We did stop the closure of libraries in this province. Do you know what? I bet a lot more people are using libraries today, because of the situation we're in, than ever before.

We're here for a reason. We're here to represent people. This is not a filibuster; this is a debate. At 12 o'clock, under the new rules that were brought in by your government, there are no

more filibusters. We'll go home tonight and we'll come here again 10 tomorrow morning. This is a debate.

Normally in a budget, there are a couple of non-confidence motions and every Member in this House will at least get one hour to speak – one hour in the House. You speak on the non-confidence, you speak on the motion and then you speak on the main budget. No non-confidence vote in this because we've all agreed to do it.

This is an opportunity we have to talk about things in our district, things that are important. Things like pension plans and how it's important for people to be able to access money so they don't lose their homes, so they don't lose their cars, so they don't lose what they have, what they've built up. These are very difficult times for people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm sure there's not one person that's in this House of Assembly tonight that doesn't realize it, and haven't had a call from somebody saying: I don't know what I'm going to do. What am I going to do?

I had a call yesterday from a young man, 32 years old, electrician, on the Husky project down in Argentina. He said: Kevin, is it true that they're not going back to work next year? He said: I'm going to lose my house. There's no work out West. He said: I'm with the union. I'm calling all day long. I'm going to lose my – is there anything coming? I said: I don't know. I'm hoping that you can find something. He's willing to do anything. I mean, willing to do anything. I need a job, he said. Anyone you know where I can go get a job to? What do we tell these people?

Listen, that's not only one person; that's people in every district in this province. That's what we're here in the House of Assembly for, to try to be able to have some solutions for people. So when the minister thinks that this is a waste of time tonight, it's not a waste of time, minister. It's not a waste of time at all. You can tell your friend that we're here tonight to talk for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the crowd over on the other side are doing a good job of it. You tell them that, okay? Because I'm sorry if you want to go home, because I don't care about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I will tell you one thing, as a province – the first speech I gave tonight, I started off by saying how lucky we are, and we're lucky. Because you know what? I really believe we have people in this House of Assembly, and I know we have people in Newfoundland and Labrador that care. We have volunteers out there that will go do anything. Volunteer firefighters, volunteer Lions Club, volunteers all over this province. We do more volunteer hours per capita than any other province in Canada. There's a reason for it: because we care about our neighbours; we care about people.

When I listened tonight to some of the speeches that were done here tonight and thanking people for all that they've done, that's who we are as people. Newfoundland and Labrador and the people in Newfoundland and Labrador are the greatest province and the greatest bunch of people that are around. We're here tonight to put their concerns forward. Now, if you listen to them, that's up to yourselves. That's up to you. The Minister of Education wants to listen to the Member for St. John's Centre when he talks concerns about education. I talked concerns about education tonight too. Well, I hope you listened to them.

The hon. Member just spoke. He said: I don't know why we're here; we're not listening to anything else. We're all here because my opinion and the opinion of whether a person wants a bit of paving or don't want a bit of paving, we're all entitled to our opinion. That's what a democratic society is all about. It's about 40 people that were elected by the people in Newfoundland and Labrador to express their opinions, to give their ideas, to say what's on their mind, to represent the people in their districts. That's what we're all here for. Every person in this House of Assembly is here for the people that elected them.

There are no bosses here. Do you know who my bosses are? My bosses are the people in Cape St. Francis that elect me. I don't care who you are; I don't care if you vote for me or didn't vote for me. If you make a phone call to my office, I will answer the call because you're a constituent of

mine. I think we're here to represent all people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Really, honestly when I listened to that speech a couple of minutes ago – and I'm sorry, Minister, for keeping you up late, but I tell you one thing right now, we can stay up a lot later. The people in Newfoundland and Labrador, their concerns will be heard here in the House of Assembly if our party and the people on this side have anything to say about it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, let's recap for a moment, will we. Tonight we're debating on granting the government the ability to borrow an additional \$1 billion on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the people whom we represent.

Mr. Chair, the reason which I am focusing on public-private partnerships is that the province has already committed to \$1.5 billion in planned 30-year contracts. So I can draw a pretty direct link between we want to borrow a billion dollars and we're using a billion dollars for infrastructure.

You may note that I have asked numerous questions in the House of Assembly about the use of public-private partnerships, the terms of contract, some of the escalation costs associated with that, the way in which the maintenance will be done, just some finer points in the contract and, quite honestly, I've not received an answer. In fact, as I refer to the report from which I have been quoting, we find that we have, in fact, spent \$5 million on public dollars, 88 per cent of which was given to a sole-sourced consultant. That consultant won that initial contract without a competitive process. Mr. Chair, the reason we are here tonight is because we are looking to spend that billion dollars and we have had very little accountability on the \$1.5 billion that we've already spent.

In that context of that expenditure, not only do we not know where that money is being spent; we are not being told what the terms and conditions of those contracts are. In fact, and I think this is a particularly important point, the “consultant was awarded an initial contract without a competitive process, the conclusions of which” – now remember, we have not seen the \$5.1-million report that this sole-sourced contractor provided, but it says “... the conclusions of which led to it being awarded other contracts to support the P3 projects that they recommended.” If that’s not an incestuous relationship, Mr. Chair, I don’t know what is.

I quote from the report: “A consultant that both assesses and promotes P3s is a perversion of good decision-making.” Mr. Chair, what we are doing today is talking about good decision-making and the lack thereof in our awarding of P3 contracts. When we start to talk about the access to information requests and publicly available information, we find that the “report dispels the claim that there is any financial or other discernable advantages in regard to the design, build or maintenance of these infrastructure projects using a P3 approach.”

We’ve been told by this sole-sourced contractor – and we haven’t seen the report – that this is a good idea, but we have no other evidence that the spending of this \$1.5 billion was a good idea. In fact, we don’t know if it’s going to save us money or if it’s going to get us more services or if those services are going to be provided in a more efficient or appropriate way. What we do know is that these P3 deals are locking the province into 30-year contracts that include capital costs and costs for maintenance.

Mr. Chair, we all know that if you buy a house and you pay it out over 30 years, that’s a good investment because houses, they retain and sometimes appreciate in value. But if you also throw in the cost of the furnishings of that house and you pay that over 30 years, by the time you get that couch paid off, that couch has been handed down to your child and that child has handed it off to the next child when they went through university. You’ve got four new couches already gone through the house before you get the couch that you paid off, that you bought when you bought that house, under the

course of a 30-year contract. That is not a smart use of money.

So, Mr. Chair, the reason we are here today is because we are asking, collectively, we want to borrow an additional billion dollars on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and I don’t have any rationale for why this is a good idea. In fact, I’m not even allowed to see the report that told me it was a good idea to do it in the first place, let alone seeing the contract that we just signed on for, for 30 years.

We have a responsibility to the public purse. I’m being told that this is a waste of taxpayers’ money. No, Sir. It is a waste of taxpayers’ money when we are committing to long-term contracts and, I quote, I want to go back to this: “Locking into 30-year contracts with a declining population, and unknown needs in the future, plus an economic and fiscal crisis, would be especially unwise for NL.”

Now, given that I have not gotten sensible answers to any of the P3 questions that I’ve asked to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and given that there has been no forum to address any of the P3 contracts or even the feasibility or practicality of those, let alone the efficiencies associated with it, then I think we are here for a darn fine reason, Mr. Chair. I will happily go on all night about why we ought to be debating these types of things. I will take every advantage of the time we have to discuss something that seems to be very well desired to be well hidden.

Mr. Chair, to go back to the P3 models, one of the rationales within the P3 modelling is to try and capture the additional unforeseen costs or risks in these P3 models. Being a provincial government, when we take on an infrastructure project, we take on all the risks associated with that and those risks sometimes are quite large and sometimes are quite small. But we do take on those risks and because we have a fiscal capacity and because we have a stream of revenues and we are backed by the Government of Canada and we are reasonably safe, it is relatively easy for a provincial government to adjust to unforeseen risks.

Mr. Chair, I did happen to find some document that addressed some of the risks that are

captured when P3 models are presented and we see some of the proposals associated with it.

Mr. Chair, I note one of the more ridiculous risks associated with one of the P3 contracts I saw was the risk of a civil uprising in Corner Brook. I've not heard of a civil uprising in Corner Brook and I really don't think that there's much cause for us to be too concerned, or concerned enough to build in a factor of risk of the potential for a civil uprising in the City of Corner Brook so we can build a long-term care facility there.

MR. BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

MS. COFFIN: Perhaps we need an adjustment for the Member for Corner Brook. Perhaps we may just need a by-election.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. COFFIN: Mr. Chair, I note in our study that the –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. COFFIN: I just said by-election. The sole advantage to using P3s is political.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. COFFIN: I note the report says: "The sole advantage to using P3s is political – a smaller amount of the capital costs added to the debt in the current government's balance sheet." It is simply a way to hide debt. We do not know the stream of payments that we have committed to over the next 30 years.

Mr. Chair, that is the reason we are here tonight. Given the opportunity, I will happily talk at length about more reasons why we need to stay here and discuss this further.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour; the Member for Corner Brook.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, I understand there may be a by-election that's imminent so I'll keep my comments brief.

I want to thank the hon. Member for her kind deliberations on the merits, or lack thereof, of P3s; however, I would also like to add the comments from the people of Corner Brook about P3s and how it has impacted their lives.

Mr. Chair, what I can report to this hon. House and to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is that if one were to have a by-election in the District of Corner Brook on the merits – or maybe not a by-election, maybe a referendum – of P3s, I think what you would find is that there would be near unanimous support for the government's proposal and implementation of the P3s. That would not be dissimilar, Mr. Chair, to the unanimous support that the government has received from all parties on our budget.

Now, Mr. Chair, in terms of the potential for uprising, allow me to say there was a potential for uprising. There was a call for an uprising. I believe certain members of the labour movement, who I have a deep respect for and a profound admiration for and like to call a partner, but there was a call for an insurrection, a civil action against P3s in Corner Brook, led by certain members of the labour movement. I think it did attract three or four people. So there was no civil disobedience related to P3s in Corner Brook, despite calls for the same. What we did get was a very strong motion of support for what did occur.

Now, Mr. Chair, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If you were to examine a model of long-term care construction and design-build model that produced the older, but somewhat new, long-term care facility located on University Avenue, you would find a good building. You'd find a building that was built by a company that I believe was the Pomerleau group out of Quebec. They built that building in 2008. I believe it was awarded by the former PC government, but the architecture, the design of that particular building was substantially different than what you found in the

construction, design, build, finance and maintain model of the 145-bed long-term care facility that was just opened last year.

If you were to ask the people of Corner Brook their own thoughts, their own perspectives, their own consideration of the traditional design-build model where government designed the building and tendered it out and simply produced a turnkey operation where the prime contractor just simply built the building and walked away from it immediately upon construction and offered a one-year warranty in its fabrication, what you'd find is the building that was built in 2008 is very much different than the building that was built and completed last year. Yes, I think you would find that it would be called adequate but by no means superior.

I would contrast that with the long-term care building build that was completed last year. The 145-bed unit with 120 beds in long-term care, 15 beds in rehabilitation and 10 beds for palliative care. That is an incredible facility. Every Corner Brooker, every son or daughter of a parent who entered that building, every person who required alternative care arrangements, everyone who has ever witnessed that structure has said this is a place we are proud of.

It has individual dining facilities for each floor. It has rooms for palliative care. It has rooms specially designed so that family members could spend the last days with loved ones together as a family in an overnight setting. It has capacity; it has laundry rooms that were built in to the design. Mr. Chair, those rooms don't exist to the 2008 structure, the traditional government build, of design build. They were put in place by a competitive process that saw patient best interests, financial best interests, economic best interests and health care best interests built into the project.

If you were to ask and have a referendum tomorrow, which particular facility would meet with the greater satisfaction of the people of the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador and, in particular, from the people from my District of Corner Brook, I do not think you would find any comparison between the two. You would have unanimous support for the design, build, finance and maintain option that the government has chosen.

Mr. Chair, in addition to that, if I could highlight some other features. It was suggested that there's no evidence of cost savings. There's no evidence of other features that are worthwhile of merit for this House to be made aware of or understand. That is not true. There was an economic analysis, a financial analysis that did determine that there would be a \$15 million savings to taxpayers as a result of the design, build, maintain option, and that's proven out.

Now, \$15 million, Mr. Chair, we've heard a lot of the requirement for road construction in our province. I bet there are a lot of Members in this Chamber that would like to have part of that \$15 million that we saved for roads in their districts. Mr. Chair, it is, in essence, available for those purposes. Money we saved in one function becomes available for other functions.

Mr. Chair, I could speak of other financial details, of the fact that in the previous traditional model of simple design build and walk away with the tail-light warranty attached, you have a different model here where the builder has a competitive advantage or an incentive, I should say, for over engineering the building to be able to reduce costs in heating and maintenance over the long term.

For example, in the basic specs of the building, the acute care hospital, there was no requirement of triple glazing of windows. There was no requirement of using flooring that had a 30-year warranty attached to it, but that's what the builder decided. In the construction of the bid, that's what was chosen because having superior building materials was in the best interest of not only the patient, the health care facility itself, but in the contractor.

In essence, we have an over-engineered building that I am pretty darn proud of and will stand the test of time, because there's an incentive built in to really overbuild – and I use that expression with my tongue firmly planted in my cheek, because it's not overbuilt. It's built in a very prudent, efficient but highly economic model that is designed so it can last well beyond the 30-year life cycle of the builder without a tailgate warranty attached. If there are any issues of poor workmanship, it is the company, not the government, that holds that liability. That's why

there's an incentive to do it right from the first time.

I think there are companies, maybe one of which was the company that built the other long-term care, where they're still to this day involved in litigation over issues surrounding that particular building. The same thing in other facilities, like in Carbonear. Mr. Chair, those issues are largely resolved by the fact that the builder has the responsibility of maintaining the building over the long term so they get it right, not with the tailgate warranty attached but with a 30-year warranty attached.

That is why I have become a strong proponent of well-implemented P3s. I hope this province takes it as an example other construction projects to come.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course I can't let it go without talking about the hospital in Corner Brook and the long-term care. With all due respect to the people who were talking about the three Ps, I just want to give a little history here about the hospital.

I think the first announcement was made in 2007. I was there. I wasn't at the announcement but I was there in Corner Brook when the announcement was made that there was going to be a hospital built. They set it all up in 2007. I think it was six or seven announcements made between 2007 and up to 2015. I was at that uprising, actually, when they were up there, and I tell you, it was Wayne Lucas from CUPE. They had a protest.

I went up to the protest and I stood up and I said to Wayne Lucas – and I'll give a bit of history of it. The case that they were using was a school in Nova Scotia that they built. The only problem they had, they didn't say at the end of the 30 years that the government owns the school. At the end of 20 years, the government said we want to buy the school. They said oh, you want

to buy our school now. That's where the price went up.

That was the case in some of those studies. It wasn't that it was a plan from day one at 30 years to bring it up to this level and we take it. That was not the case. The case in the study was that the school was going to be at 30 years still owned by the company. The government in 20 years said we'll buy the school. They said, okay, here's the cost, which drove the cost up.

When you want to talk about the three Ps and use that example, you have to put the facts on the table. In this case, the cost is built in.

The other factor here, and I'll say this, when we became government in 2015-2016, in 2015, while it was announced in Corner Brook, with all due respect – and the minister is not here now, the guy who made the announcement – they were building a long-term care on the site for the hospital, they had a private company from BC to come in and set up the long-term care. They gave them the land and set up a profit company coming in for long-term care. We put a stop on that in 2016.

That's the history of it. We need to give the correct history of it. That was stopped because there was a company coming from BC – the BC government, at the time, was getting them to set up the long-term care.

The other big issue – and I know the Member for Corner Brook just went through the costs – was public sector employees. There was a rally out here on the steps when people were talking about public sector employees, that it's going to be farmed out, we're going to give it off for profit groups.

I don't know if there are one or two that can remember this – I went out on those steps and faced 400 people. I stood up and I said: You have my personal guarantee, the government's guarantee that there are going to be public sector employees in that to offer the best care possible. I went out there and I stood on those steps in front of 400 people, some booed, some said we'll go ahead with it. That's the history.

The other part that we're missing here is about the cost. I'll just give you a good example that's

been debated in this House: Muskrat Falls. What's the cost overrun? What's the longevity of Muskrat Falls that was supposed to be built? When was it supposed to be opened? How it was to be opened. We still haven't got the power.

When you go with 3Ps, there's no cost overrun for government and it has to be built on time or there's a penalty.

The other part about the 3Ps and I'm not sure which exactly – a study that's there. The other part with 3Ps that when you take it over in 30 years, there's a contract of what standard it has to be built up to. That's the other part of it. That's the other part, is what standard it has to be built up to. So when you take it over, you're not taking over something that's downtrodden or something, there's a standard you have to take it up to.

I agree that there are funds there, but when you actually cost it over so many years, the maintenance, where you don't have the employees and you don't have the people outside. Because like we said, anything inside will be public sector employees and the outside is the company.

That's the facts and that's where a lot of the savings come in and the government then have to go borrow on top of their debt. There's no doubt, you're right on that, I'll say to the Leader of the Opposition. It don't show on the books. But it's like anything that you do, if you spend over 30 years and you're going to spend a dollar a year, that's \$30, but if you're going to spend 78 cents over 30 years, that's less money. If you do the extra calculations on the 3Ps, that's the simplified version, but that's how it works because no cost overrun and then you get the building at the end of it, you own the building at a certain ...

The other part – and I know the Member for Corner Brook is big on this – the biggest part for me about all of this, I remembers going to former Premier Dwight Ball at the time, and we were in Opposition, and there was a person in the Premier's office by the name of Joy Buckle. One of the things I said to him, which, again, the previous administration before 2015 never had, was a radiation unit so people from the West Coast didn't have to come in here and have that

dreaded disease without family present. Joy Buckle started on that. We talked to Bob Cook. He's the doctor in Corner Brook. We talked to him and said: How do we start this?

He gave a name: Dr. David Saltman. Dr. David Saltman was the radiologist who used to go to Corner Brook and offer his services in Corner Brook. He pushed for years to get a unit in Corner Brook, Dr. David Saltman. Eventually, he moved on because they wouldn't agree with him. I remember contacting him. I tracked him down in Victoria, British Columbia, Dr. David Saltman. I said: Here's what I want to get done and here's who's going to do most of the work – Joy Buckle. This is a person whose name is never mentioned, but she did yeoman service for that radiation unit, I guarantee you.

He started giving us names, people from Australia, all over Canada, all over North America that we were in contact with. I remember the arguments in this House we had about isotopes, that you couldn't fly them in because you can't have them. I proved all that wrong. I remember us going to Dwight Ball at the time and saying: We have to do a radiation. He said: B'y, that's big. I said: If we don't, I'm not running in 2015. I'm not putting my neck on the line and not have radiation. Joy Buckle went and proved it, got it done; a lot of us, we worked on it and we got radiation.

When you talk about the cost to government and you talk about the unknown cost, how much would it cost; you have people coming in; the travel subsidies. That's not even counted in under this: the pain and suffering for people to come in with all this.

I remember the incident in Corner Brook when I confronted the union and I walked up. Do you know what the workers said to me? Except for one, the leader of the union. Do you know what everybody else said? We think it's a good idea. That's why there's no uprising in Corner Brook.

After you sit down and you do the cost analysis and you say, okay, this makes sense. The cost analysis does make sense when you look at the costing and how it's paid out and you're not worried about the cost overrun; you're not worried about the maintenance; you're not worried about not being on time. You're still

into \$12 million, \$15 million over 30 years and you don't have to come up with the capital cost, which the government would have been another billion dollars in the hole. It makes good sense.

If you look at the human cost of the hospital in Corner Brook and the radiation unit in Corner Brook, it's immeasurable. Anybody here who wants to talk about the hospital and the radiation unit that's put there – and I know the Member for Corner Brook is passionate about it and so am I – that was beaten to death for years and it was all proven false.

Any time anybody wants to bring it up and say, okay, we shouldn't have built a hospital in Corner Brook or shouldn't have built a radiation unit, ask the people who have to come into St. John's should we have a radiation unit. Ask them. Ask them if we should have the long-term care facility instead of bringing down a private company from BC for profit, setting it right up on the site, right there: profit, settle up. That's what was put in place.

I remember in 2011, when I got elected in 2011, we were here and we were discussing – Tom Hedderson was the minister of Health at the time. I have to give him credit, he was so honest. I only have 30 seconds left, so I'll speak fast.

I remember, it was during Estimates. I asked Tom Hedderson: Can we see the plans for the hospital? Do you know what he said? We haven't even got them. I said, what are you talking about? Tom Hedderson – I give him credit, he was honest – he said, we haven't even got the draft done. He said, we haven't even got the draft design done yet. The big announcement was in 2011. The hon. Member for Corner Brook can remember that, when it was the big announcement (inaudible) we're starting the hospital and they never even had the design done.

MR. HAGGIE: (Inaudible) 2015.

MR. JOYCE: And in 2015 it wasn't done.

So I just want to pass on my views on the hospital and the radiation, and I support it 100 per cent. The same with the people on the West Coast, and Labrador also.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have another opportunity to speak to this bill. I guess this will probably be the last one now for tonight. Based on the rules, we're out of here at 12 o'clock.

Mr. Chair, I want to say right off the bat, I like the minister of Natural Resources. I always have. I do. I like him, I respect him. He's a good parliamentarian. He's pretty smart politically, but I have to say, when he got up and spoke the last time it felt to me almost like Babe Ruth in Yankee Stadium. Babe Ruth, in this case, is going to be the Member for Cape St. Francis, and that ball –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: That baseball is lobbing in and it's right over the centre of the plate and it's nice and slow. The Member is there and he's pointing out to the outfield and he hits it right over the fence. It's almost like he set him up perfectly. He set him up perfectly, I have to say.

On the point, though, that the minister raised, I think it's important to put it in context for this person who he's talking to on the phone or whoever and is asking about why we're here tonight and so on.

MR. A. PARSONS: They're gone to bed.

MR. LANE: Gone to bed now, okay. Maybe you could tell this person in the morning.

No, the reason why we're here, let's put it in context, is the government put us here tonight. Because normal business, we'd be out of here at 5:30 today. It was the government who decided we're going to keep the House open tonight. The government could've at any time – at 7 o'clock they could've adjourned debate, at 8 o'clock they could've adjourned debate, at 9 o'clock they could've adjourned debate, 10 o'clock they could've adjourned debate, 11 o'clock they

could've adjourned debate, but they're not adjourning debate. So to suggest it's the people on this side that's keeping us here until midnight, that's really not true.

The government could've closed down debate at any time and tomorrow we could've went about regular business. Maybe we'd go on this bill, maybe they'd choose a different bill; we'd have Private Members' Day tomorrow and so on. It's really in the government's hands.

When we're talking about the fact that we're in a new age filibuster – I'm going to call it a new age filibuster because the normal filibuster is gone. When we changed the legislation we wouldn't be here all night, but this new age filibuster that we're in is really kind of created now by the government. So we'll just continue on tomorrow morning at 10 and we'll keep talking until we're tired of talking about it.

So we're clear, it's not this side that created this situation, it's that side that created it. Obviously, they had their mind made up, well, we want to get this bill through tonight. We just want to get it through, so we're going to have this little game of attrition here now. We're going to stay here and they're going to get tired. Then, come 7 o'clock they'll say enough of this b'ys, it's time to go home; or 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock. I guess they're a little surprised by the fact that we said no, we got lots to say. We got lots to say, so we're not going home.

I have a feeling this is going to continue right on through tomorrow and we're going to be here tomorrow night, we're probably still going to be doing it. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that were to happen, but let's be clear on how we got in this particular situation. The government had every opportunity to stop it but for some reason they want to get this bill through ASAP, and I don't know what the hurry is. I don't know what the hurry is. At the end of the day, we're all here anyway. People are in here from town and whatever, so the travel costs are here. We're here till midnight. There's nothing being held up. There are no additional costs really.

To suggest that government's business is being somehow upended here and things aren't getting done, I mean most people went home at 5 o'clock, the people that are going to be in the

departments. So I don't think there's going to be a whole lot of meetings that would have taken place at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock tonight to be pushing any significant agendas.

The argument, I have to say, is a bit weak but I give them full marks. I do give them full marks for at least trying to put that across on behalf of his colleagues, and that's all part of the game too. We know that.

AN HON. MEMBER: He tried to hoodwink you.

MR. LANE: He tried to hoodwink me. He couldn't hoodwink me.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: No, no. In fairness, I can't say they did because they're not the same "they" that were there before. I think the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island and the Member for Cape St. Francis were hoodwinked too. I think they were hoodwinked too. I think it took them a little longer to realize and come to grips with the fact that they were hoodwinked, but they were. Anyway, I appreciate that.

Anyway, with that said, we have like four minutes and 30 seconds left here now. So I'm just going to take this opportunity to put a little plug in once again. I know I'm like a broken record on this but I really think now that we're on the topic of being hoodwinked by the \$6-million man and all of his accomplices that are still there – and I think that's a point that still needs to be made. I understand we talk about contracts. I was told the contracts that were in place, we can't deal with these individuals who are still here. Everyone is going off, sailing off into the sunset with their big retirement and everything else and their big payouts.

I asked about that. I asked about the contracts when we were in Estimates. I think it was Finance. It might not be Finance but I think it might have been Finance, human resources. I asked about that and said can we write contracts so that this doesn't happen in the future. I was basically told no. To suggest that there was some contract that was made up for these people that was over and above and special or something that protected them, that's not the case. I was

told at the Estimates that the same contract that these people had would be the same contract that new people would have.

Basically what we're saying is that if you go to work for a government agency, board or commission, there seems to be a different standard than would apply in private industry from what I can see. It seems like in this case you can display absolute incompetence, negligence, you name it. You can hide risk reports, you can fudge numbers, you can do everything, and at the end of the day you can keep your job. There's no way of getting rid of you and if you do, it's going to cost us a fortune.

I will never accept that. I'm sorry. I will never accept that. I think we should have challenged it. Even if we ran the risk of losing, so what? If they have to fight it in court for a couple of years or something to send a strong message, so be it. I feel like we've totally let some of these individuals off the hook.

By the way, most people – because some of them get the impression that somehow I'm against Nalcor and everything. That's not true. You can laugh, too. It's not true. There are a lot of good people, honest, hard-working people that work at Nalcor and its subsidiaries, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and so on. I think of the people who go out in all kinds of weather and everything else and the regular workers and stuff. They're not the ones that did this. It was the suits, the controlling minds.

It was the people at the highest level of the organization, as was borne out in the Muskrat Falls inquiry, as was borne out in Commissioner LeBlanc's report. It was these individuals that did this, that provided false information to myself, to at least a couple of other Members in this House of Assembly, absolutely did, and they're getting off with it scot-free.

I understand and I appreciate that the government does have a police investigation at least to look into it. I don't know what's going to come of it and they're going to look to see if there are any civil actions and so on. Those were things that I recommended long ago and I'm glad they did it. I hope to God, I hope that they can hold some people accountable. Because right now, as far as I'm concerned, what's gone

on as been an absolute farce, an absolute disgrace and a slap in the face to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian that watched –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Yes, and I wish I hadn't voted for it. Yes, you're darn right. I wish I hadn't voted for it. But I did so. I did what I had to do in good faith. I thought I was doing the right thing, but unfortunately –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

AN HON. MEMBER: Keep going.

MR. LANE: Everyone is saying keep going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LANE: Oh, we got a (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Given the hour of the day, or morning, in accordance with Standing Order 11(2), I will now rise the Committee, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have made progress and ask leave to sit again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means has reported that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred, have made progress and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

AN HON. MEMBER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

AN HON. MEMBER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted.
Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Given the hour of the day and pursuant to our *Standing Orders*, the House is now adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

On motion, the House as its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.