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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, it is with a heavy heart I pay tribute to a former MHA, colleague and dear friend, George Murphy.

Like many people across this province, I woke up yesterday morning and was shocked to learn of George's sudden passing.

George Murphy had a strong voice, a large social conscience and an even bigger heart. His love of Newfoundland and Labrador was just who he was, and it was the centre of everything he did. He worked for over 30 years in the taxi industry as a driver, dispatcher and, most recently, manager of Jiffy Cabs in St. John's.

In 2011, George was elected as the Member of the House of Assembly for the District of St. John's East. Those who served in the House of Assembly with George instantly recognized his passion for making this province a better place for all of us. His generosity and kindness knew no bounds, and his laughter was infectious. He was always smiling, always ready to put a positive spin on whatever challenge lay ahead of him.

George was known to many as the Gas Guru. He spent over 15 years as the spokesperson for the Consumer Group for Fair Gas Prices. We all looked forward to hearing George on when to head to the pumps every week. His knowledge in oil and gas was extensive and truly appreciated by everyone in the province. Most recently, George worked with our Liberal caucus and staff in the Government Members Office where his sage advice, wise counsel and calmness was respected by all of my colleagues.

But, Mr. Speaker, beyond those he helped, he was a husband, a father and a grandfather. I'm sure we are all thinking of his wife, Joy, children and grandchildren who have lost someone they

loved dearly. I spoke with Joy yesterday; I passed along condolences to her and to his whole family on behalf of this House and the entire province.

Joy told me just moments before he passed, George posted a picture from his firepit. With it was the attached message: "Nudding like it..." That was George. He was able to simplify things to what's important, to what is meaningful to people he loved and to those who loved him.

He did that in his professional life as well, Mr. Speaker. We should all look to the example George Murphy set to help make this hon. House, this province and, indeed, this world a better place to live.

We should do that to honour his memory. We are all stronger and blessed to have known George Murphy and I am lucky to have called him my friend.

10-4, Sir. Over and out.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Premier for a copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition and all residents in my district, I send my deepest and most heartfelt condolences to George's family and friends.

George was a proud resident of this province and was a friend to everyone he encountered. His friendliness and his smile was always a welcome presence in the hallways of this building. George's tenure as an MHA, his dedication to keeping drivers updated on gas prices and his passion for life truly made this a better place.

But most of all, George was a true gentleman. While politics can be decisive, it can also show you a person's true character. I recall vividly that George ran against me in my first election. On election night, he came to my headquarters to congratulate me, offered me advice and made sure I would act in the best interests of the district. At that moment, I didn't consider him an opponent but considered him a friend.

My heartfelt condolences go out to George's wife, Joy, his family and many friends. Rest easy, big fellow. You'll be missed.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the Third Party caucus, were deeply saddened this weekend when we heard the news. Many tears were shed as we saw tributes pour in from across the province.

We knew George through his daily visits to our office to deliver minister statements for a response. We knew him from the chance encounters on the fifth floor hallways and the precincts of the House of Assembly. He was always friendly and willing to engage in conversation. According to Gerry Rogers, a former colleague, George was a person of great integrity and compassion. She says it was an honour to work with him while he was an MHA.

He loved being an MHA and his commitment to the people of the province was strong. Why else would he take it upon himself to research price fluctuations in gas and oil week after week and let people know, free of charge, so they could adjust their fill-ups accordingly? It was a privilege for him to serve the people of his district and of the province, and he took his duties as an MHA seriously and with pride, joy, humour and humility. He also enjoyed Committee work and loved serving on the Public Accounts Committee; he was good at it. He also worked tirelessly to bring people together; he believed it was necessary for all of us to work together, despite partisanship.

He was very proud of his work on the Move Over legislation; the legislation requires drivers to slow down and move over to another lane when approaching a stopped police vehicle, ambulance, tow truck or municipal or provincial vehicle on the side of the road. That was his piece of legislation and he felt it was important to the safety of workers and first responders.

He loved Newfoundland and Labrador and its people. For years, he was dedicated to the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards in Newfoundland and Labrador, advocating for youth programming.

George truly was a man of the people; he was a fierce defender of fairness and justice for everyone. He was a magnet and drew people to him wherever he went.

He loved his wife, Joy, his young twin boys and his lovely daughter. To his family we say thank you for sharing him with us and with the people of this province that he loved. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time and we carry you and the memory of George in our hearts.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: I'll ask all Members to rise for a moment of silence for the late George Murphy.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements from the hon. the Members for the Districts of Bonavista, Stephenville - Port au Port, Conception Bay South, Burin - Grand Bank and St. George's - Humber.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to honour the memory of master boat builder Henry Vokey of Trinity who passed away on January 27 of this year at the age of 91 years.

This giant of the province's boat building was born in Little Harbour in 1929. Following in the footsteps of his grandfathers and uncles, he built his first full-size vessel at 25 years of age.

At 35, when his family moved to Trinity, he and his two brothers opened Vokey's shipyard, an enterprise he proudly ran for the next three decades.

Henry Vokey built over 1,000 vessels – punts and rodneys, trap boats and dories, speed boats and sailboats, longliners and schooners, including the famous schooner *J & B* and the

schooner *Leah Caroline*, launched in 2012 as documented by CBC *Land and Sea*.

As a master boat builder for more than 55 years, Henry was honoured in 2007 with the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is said that no one in this province built more boats than Henry Vokey.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in honouring Henry Vokey, a master boat builder from Trinity, Trinity Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take this opportunity today to recognize Mr. Don Gibbon Sr. for the dedication and contributions he's made to the Stephenville - Port au Port area over the past 65 years.

Don was born in St. John, New Brunswick, but moved to Stephenville in 1956. Here he met and married the love of his life Kay and raised three children, seven grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Don spent over 40 years as a radio host with CFSX radio and was known locally and provincially as Dynamite Don.

In his career as a hockey broadcaster and news reporter, Don ranks as "one of the best" commentators in Newfoundland and Labrador. His coverage of every level of hockey from high school to senior was always exciting when Dynamite Don called the play-by-play. It earned him a place in the Hockey Newfoundland and Labrador Hall of Fame in 2014.

Don has been an avid volunteer over the years with various associations which earned him the distinction of being named Citizen of the Year in 2014. He has served on council for the past 16 years with the Town of Stephenville.

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating Dynamite Don Gibbon on a long and distinguished career.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a long-time community volunteer in my district, Mr. Gerald Kelly.

The Town of Conception Bay South recently named the community room at the new CBS Arena in his honor. Gerry Kelly is great gentleman, well known for his volunteer work and involvement in the community and province, which is evident through his many contributions, achievements and awards.

He's been an outstanding contributor to various organizations like: St. Thomas of Villanova Parish, Knights of Columbus, CBS Monument of Honour Committee, Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association, chairman of Poppy Campaign, Holy Spirit minor hockey, CBR Minor Hockey, CBS Parks and Recreation Committee, CBS softball association, NL amateur championships and Hockey Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gerry has been recognized as Coach of the Year, CBS Sports Hall of Fame inductee, Canada Games Mission Staff representative, lifetime member of the Hockey NL Hall of Fame, CBS Lions Club Citizen of the Year, Top Recruit of the 57 Platoon of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada and Legionnaire of the Year by the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 50.

Congratulations to Mr. Gerald Kelly for his commitment and achievements. I ask hon. Members to join me in recognizing his contributions to our community and the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Mr. Speaker, we are so fortunate in this province to have so many people involved in our communities doing wonderful things and this is no truer than in my District of Burin - Grand Bank.

The Grand Bank - Fortune running group led by Nancy Douglas boasts a membership of over 25 people who either run or walk twice a week. The participants' age is anywhere between 20 to 75 years of age.

The group, through their relationships and connections to their communities, are great ambassadors and volunteers, taking a lead role in the organization of events such as the Terry Fox Run and the kids' run during Halloween in which the kids dress up and get medals for their efforts. This past year saw the group organize a Remembrance Day run dedicated to war veterans, placing signs of our veterans along their running route.

One of everyone's favorites is their Christmas Doorstep Challenge where they leave gift cards on the doorsteps of those less fortunate, those who have lost a loved one or experienced sickness in the past year.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask all Members to join me in thanking the Grand Bank-Fortune running group for their tireless community efforts.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today in the House, I would like to recognize one of the oldest residents of the Bay St. George area, Ella Olive Smith of Stephenville Crossing, who recently celebrated her 103rd birthday.

Ella Olive Smith moved to Bay St. George Long Term Care Centre in Stephenville Crossing in 2015. She was born in St. Anthony and is one of 10 children: six girls and four boys. Three of her brothers were navy veterans of the Second World War. She is now the only living member of her family.

Ella was married to Max Smith and they had four children: two boys and two girls. Her husband passed away in 1974. Ella moved to Stephenville in 1980 and lived in the Manor on base until 2006, when she moved to Acadian Village seniors home.

Ella's children tell us that she is a believer in luck and would often spend time searching for a four-leaf clover when times were rough in her life.

I ask all Members to join with me in recognizing Ella Olive Smith for her long life well lived, and to wish her the best of luck in coming years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, today in this hon. House, I want to highlight our province's tourism industry.

In a time of great uncertainty, our tourism industry has continued to be resilient, revamping themselves and pushing forward despite being one of the hardest hit industries throughout the pandemic.

Last week brought a renewed sense of optimism with the release of *Together.Again.*, our plan to safely reopen Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been wonderful to see and hear the enthusiasm and excitement from our tourism operators as they begin to prepare to welcome Canadian travellers back to our beautiful province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you. Thank you to Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, the Premier's Advisory Council on Tourism, the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Tourism Board, as well as all our tourism operators and stakeholders. They have been passionate, determined and innovative, collectively working with government on a solid path to recovery.

Our tourism industry is a vital economic driver. Prior to COVID-19, the tourism industry generated \$1.14 billion in visitor spending, supporting 20,000 employees and 2,800 businesses. *Budget 2021* provides considerable support to the sector including \$30 million for the Tourism Hospitality Assistance Program and \$13 million for the continuation of the province's award-winning marketing campaign.

Mr. Speaker, there is a clear light at the end of the tunnel and, together, we will rebuild our incredible tourism industry. We are also very excited about the initial plans for Come Home Year 2022, which will benefit the industry and help us all reunite.

The work and the tireless efforts put forth by the entire industry, is truly commendable. As we prepare to welcome back our family, our friends and new and returning travellers, I encourage everyone to remain resilient and celebrate being "together again" in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I want to recognize Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and all tourism operators for advocating for their industry, for being vocal and for seeking support to increase our tourist authentic experiences.

With that being said, I want to take this opportunity to tell all those who work in tourism, hospitality and cultural sectors that we support you. We continue to listen to your accounts of how your businesses have been impacted by the ongoing pandemic and we will continue to support you.

In order for the tourism sector to rebound, we will need to continue promoting staycations and also ensure that tourists have cost-effective ways to visit our province. This means the necessary air access routes and affordable ferry assistance. I believe the government should do more to

ensure that when it is safe to do so, visitors have access to our beautiful province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I would like to commend the tourism operators across the province, urban and rural, on their resilience in the face of overwhelming adversity since the onset of COVID-19. It's going to take a lot of time and work to rebuild after our time in isolation, but I hope you all can come back stronger than ever before next year.

I call upon the people to consider exploring our own province, to see what our local tourism sector has to offer and helping in the rebuilding. As exciting as it is for the world to reopen, we must remind ourselves to be safe and truly deeply appreciate our chance to be together again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to formally congratulate Justice Stacy Ryan on her appointment to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is a tremendous accomplishment in its own right, but even more noteworthy is the fact that Madam Justice Ryan holds the distinction as the first Inuk woman from Newfoundland and Labrador to hold such a prestigious position.

In the company of a small group of family members and friends, Justice Ryan was sworn in

last week during a special ceremony at the courthouse in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The road to the Supreme Court is marked by hard work and perseverance. Born and raised in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, she practiced criminal and family law in Labrador with the Legal Aid Commission for more than 20 years. Her contributions to her community are also noteworthy, as she served on various boards and volunteered her time with sports-related activities.

Madam Justice Ryan has spoken about the challenges many Labradorians like her face in pursuing their career goals, but her message to others is that education and diligence can take you a long way.

As a Labradorian and as an Indigenous woman, I am extremely proud of Madam Justice Ryan and many others like her who have broken through the proverbial glass ceiling. Well done, Madam Justice Ryan. Your achievements are an inspiration. You are an important role model for Labrador, for women and, indeed, the Indigenous community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I congratulate Justice Stacy Ryan, a beneficiary of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement, on her appointment to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's important for us to acknowledge the true benefit to Newfoundland and Labrador justice for this first appointment. Justice Ryan has spent most of her legal career working in our Labrador communities, so she is aware of the many issues impacting access to justice.

To quote Nunatsiavut Government President Johannes Lampe, Justice Ryan has spent "20 years practicing family and criminal law

throughout Labrador, and certainly has a grasp of the justice issues and concerns facing the region"

I feel that this is a very proud moment for all Labradorians and one of renewed hope for those who feel disenfranchised by the justice system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On behalf of myself and the rest of the Third Party caucus, I want to congratulate Madam Justice Ryan on her appointment.

It may have taken until 2021 for us to reach this milestone of diversity in our justice system, but we should not let that diminish our pride and joy in Justice Ryan's accomplishments. Diversity is key to the continued evolution of our justice system, and I hope we can continue to make steps like this going forward into the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are only days remaining until a decision will be made on the future of the Terra Nova FPSO. Last week, we released documentation that the province offered to buy 15 per cent of Terra Nova.

Can the minister confirm that this offer is still on the table?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the Member opposite; it certainly is an important topic.

What I can say right now is that we continue to engage in discussions, negotiations and talks with all of the partnership group to try to figure out a way forward for this asset. There has been a deadline put forward of June 15 by the ownership group, by the operator Suncor.

We've done everything we can within our power to try to make this happen. We fully realize the importance of it to our Treasury and to our people in a multitude of ways. But what I can say is that I'll continue not to negotiate in public, as I don't think it would be in the best interest of making something positive happen.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like so many citizens of this province, I hope that the negotiations go in the right direction and this valuable asset gets to move to the next level. Newfoundland Power has asked the Public Utilities Board for an increase on electricity rates that will only inflate their guaranteed rate of return.

Does the minister think that the interest of shareholders should be put ahead of ratepayers?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I, again, thank the Member for another very important question; one that affects all of us in the province as we talk about electricity rates.

As people know, Newfoundland Power has applied to the PUB for a rate increase and we do know that the Consumer Advocate has spoken

out about that rate increase. Generally, we let the Public Utilities Board do their work.

We do know that Newfoundland Power has an obligation every three years to do a general rate application; in this case, they have asked for that rate increase. I don't believe there have been any for the past six years. At this point, we are obviously very observant, watching and will continue to let the Public Utilities Board do their work on the interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Newfoundland Power already has a guaranteed profit built into their rate. They don't need an increase. The Public Utilities Board has the power to deny this request.

Will the government do the right thing and direct the PUB to deny the shareholders' cash grab?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we do know, Newfoundland Power does have an application in; one that they have to do every three years. We also know that we have a Consumer Advocate, an independent party, that we appointed here in government to represent the interests of all consumers. What will happen now is we have this process that will play out. Basically, a semi-judicial matter will play out here where both sides will be looked at. The facts and evidence will be taken into consideration and we will see what comes out of it.

Obviously, it's difficult for government to intervene in this because if we do, we will be expected to intervene in every single matter that comes forward. At this point, we are able to watch.

Again, we always share the concerns of citizens as it relates to power rates.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the answer by the hon. minister, but we're all aware of the financial stresses that are on the citizens of this province, and particularly those on fixed incomes, when it comes to electricity rates. We have a responsibility to ensure the right thing is done here and a cash grab is not taken by a major corporation.

The purpose of the equalization program is to provide "reasonable comparable levels of public service at reasonably comparable levels of taxation." The Greene report forecasts increases in taxation and cuts in public services.

I ask the minister: Given the purpose of equalization and Greene's commentary, have you asked for equalization assistance from the federal government?

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

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

Again, another important question, I think, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As the Member opposite knows, the equalization formula is reviewed in a cycle. We've certainly been, as this government has been, very vocal to the federal government asking for changes to the equalization. They will be brought forward, again, when the time is appropriate for another review of equalization.

I did indicate last week, I guess, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government's appropriations to this province are on par with what we received when we were on equalization. We will continue to work with the federal government to continue

to make the right overtures to the federal government to make sure that we are equal in this federation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we're all aware, the equalization process has been pushed out a couple of extra years at the detriment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that supports provinces like Quebec, where they get over \$13 billion in equalization every year.

When Greene is fully implemented, public services like health care and education will be cut, while people pay more to live here, is the government satisfied to do this without challenging their federal friends for equalization support for the people of this province?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Member opposite has misspoke. We continue to put pressure on the federal government with regard to equalization. I do know in the past, when he was a former minister, the province did not make overtures to the federal government on equalization, Mr. Speaker. We, however, in this government have worked very hard to make sure the federal government understands why the formula is flawed, why it does not work for Newfoundland and Labrador. Indeed, it doesn't work for many jurisdictions across this country and have asked for a review of that formula, Mr. Speaker.

We'll be continuing to press the federal government to ensure we get our fair share of being a member of this Confederation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: It is fine to give reassurances, Mr. Speaker, but all the people of the province hear is silence from the federal MPs and the provincial MHAs.

Mr. Speaker, Come By Chance Refinery will be kept in warm idle until the end of this month. Time is ticking.

What assurances can the minister give the people of the province that this refinery has an operational future in this province?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for another question as it relates to this portfolio, one that does have a significant importance to this province.

I guess I could reiterate what I've said all along is that it is hard for us, as a provincial government, to provide 100 per cent insurance that this deal would happen, given that the asset itself is not owned by the provincial government.

Now, what we've shown in the past by an agreement that was applauded by virtually everyone – I heard nothing but good about it – is we came to an MOU with Silverpeak to allow for funding to keep it in warm idle, to ensure employment levels were met, which they have been.

We continued to engage in discussions with the owners as well as prospective interests to see what we could do and we will continue to do that for the hope of a future for the refinery.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Once again, that's fine, Mr. Speaker, but we do own the indemnity, all the licence agreements and environmental responsibility should this deal fail.

There are only days until a decision is expected on the future of Terra Nova FPSO and I understand the minister's statement that he doesn't want to bargain publicly.

What I'm asking for is: What assurances can he give the men and women who work diligently on this rig in order see success in Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member knows full well that it is impossible to give a full assurance that this asset is going to continue to operated. The fact is it has been offline since December 2019. I don't think it would be responsible for me to go out and promise something to anybody, no matter how much I want to say it or they may want to hear it, it would not be responsible for me to promise something that I simply cannot.

What I can promise is that this government is doing absolutely everything we can to ensure a future for that asset, and believe me when the opportunity comes and, hopefully, it comes after a positive or successful resolution, we will be able to show what this province was prepared to do. Until that point, what I can say is that we will continue to do the work in the hopes for a positive resolution.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I hope the minister is right, Mr. Speaker. The entire province wants to see a positive resolution.

This government has failed to develop a long-term plan for the Bull Arm facility.

Why hasn't this government used Bull Arm to attract more activity for our offshore industry?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the Member opposite.

Certainly, Bull Arm is something that is an asset for this province, but the reality is that it's been hard during the last – certainly during the last couple of years to be able to do much in the circumstances like to find it here in this province and throughout the entire globe. The reality is that we're faced with a challenging time.

We do know that DF Barnes, a local contractor, is out there with lease arrangements and they do have people on site and they're spending money. But it's not being used to its full potential.

What we can say is that we'll continue to do what we can. I don't think anybody doubts our commitment to energy in this province, to opportunity and to industry, and that includes Bull Arm. We will continue to do what we can in trying times to ensure futures for the men and women of this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: I remind the minister that the EOI for Bull Arm went out in 2016 and Hebron actually set sail June 3, 2017. That's five years for the EOI and four years for the Hebron leaving; still no activity.

West White Rose is at a standstill, the future of Bay du Nord is uncertain and the Terra Nova FPSO and Come By Chance are in peril. Minister, the clock is ticking on all of these.

Why haven't you been able to resolve any of these problems?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish I could just click my fingers and make everything right, make COVID go away, make the oil crisis go away and deal with OPEC and

all of these things. The reality is that a lot of this is out of our control.

What I will say to people, while some people on the other side like to dwell on the negative, and certainly there are challenging times out there, how about I just talk about one positive? Last week, there was speculation that Bay du Nord, which looked like it had significant findings already. There's significant speculation that it's far more than that and it could be a huge, huge resource developed here in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: I will also point out that same company, just this year, moved its entire operations from Calgary to St. John's.

What I would say: While they see negative, we will continue to see the positive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the minister is referring to as negative has grave impacts to our people for jobs. I just want to add that.

Labradorians have stopped hunting caribou in order to promote the recovery of the herds, but they still witness the continued illegal hunt by Quebecers coming in to Labrador year after year. Without real deterrents these illegal hunts will continue.

I ask the minister: When will people be held accountable?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

The Member opposite, I'm sure, is quite aware of the happenings from last year; no one was

very pleased with the outcome of the illegal hunt. But I think I've been on the record here in Estimates saying a couple of days ago at no point do we want to jeopardize someone's life when it comes to the actual enforcement of the illegal hunt.

We had officers in the area in helicopters in which hunters on the ground would have tarps. They would have tarps underneath a helicopter, which you would see as being very dangerous and it's a remote location, Mr. Speaker. In our case, the way to get there was by helicopter, and being able to get and land on the ground was very, very – well, it was dangerous, let's just put it that way.

We're going to look forward, we're going to make a trip this year when COVID permits. We're going to get to the Coast of Labrador and North Shore of Quebec.

SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to a briefing note, almost 40 per cent of the resource environmental division officer positions were vacant, yet to protect Muskrat Falls development from peaceful protesters, the government dispatched a small army of RCMP officers around the clock.

I ask the minister: Will government take steps to protect our endangered caribou herds before it's too late?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you once again for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, we're going to do everything we can within our power. We're going to do everything humanly possible that we can. We're going to meet with the groups. Our plan is to meet in Quebec as soon as we can with the people. If COVID keeps going the way it's going, I would

anticipate later this summer, early in the fall, we're going to have a conversation with the community leaders.

We need this to be led by the community, Mr. Speaker. Enforcement is one part of it, but we need to educate the hunters, the people that are abusing this, that this cannot be tolerated. That's our plan going forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I certainly hope so, because year after year the same thing is said. Year after year, the same answers are given and nothing happens.

Mr. Speaker, the final report of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry was released two years ago last week. This landmark inquiry report included 231 calls for justice.

I ask the minister: What is the status on each of the calls for justice specifically directed toward government? Will she table the status of each of these calls, please?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleague, the hon. Member.

Of course, it's a very important topic, as we all agree. I was pleased to see the commitment that the prime minister had made just last week at \$2.2 billion. That said, we're working collaboratively with the Department of Justice and Public Safety and Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, as well as the Office of Women and Gender Equality. We will work with Indigenous communities across Newfoundland and Labrador to take those initiatives and to make them fit here for our province, for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that we will take our lead from the Indigenous people across our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association, the number of Canadians who have contemplated suicide has more than doubled.

What initiatives will be launched this year to address the COVID-19 mental health crisis?

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

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for a really important question.

COVID has stressed a lot of people beyond where they were already stressed from some of their own challenges. We have our stepped-care approach in place. Bridge the gApp has been boosted for step zero, step one. We are working hard to make sure Doorways is accessible. It's available in over 70 communities.

In terms of going forward, we will have a suicide action life-promotion plan to present to the public later on this summer, which has been part of the recommendations from *Towards Recovery*.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Access to long-term supports remains a barrier for people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's one thing to get short-term counselling, but access to long-term treatment remains a problem.

I ask the minister: What is being done to increase access to long-term mental health supports?

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

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

There are several thrusts to that; firstly, the emphasis on more community supports rather than institutional provision of services. As part of *Towards Recovery*, we're moving resources over the next year or so out into the community. That has already been started.

With specific reference to the stepped-care model, we have recognized that we have a challenge with cancelling services. We're working with the regional health authorities to address issues around recruitment, retention and then also provision of services, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's a work in progress and because of COVID, it's gone a little bit slower than we would have liked, but we are at it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I note in the Budget Speech this year that I think mental health is only mentioned a couple of times. The solution mentioned in there is eHealth. Of course, a recent study that just came out from the Canadian Medical Association suggests that eHealth is not working for the most vulnerable population here, who do not have the ways and means to access. So time is urgent in this particular case.

Mr. Speaker, we know the Premier's report is recommending an overall 25 per cent cut to health care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the minister: Will you commit here today that not a single dollar of funding for mental

health services will be cut as a result of the Premier's recommendations?

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

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

I think he kind of got it a little bit wrong there with the idea about reduction of services. We put significant money into CHANNAL; we have bolstered provision of services in rural areas. We've set up mental health and addiction hubs in a variety of locations, which are new to the province. We've seen an increased enrolment in addictions services and opioid-dependence treatment. At the end of the day, we will have a system that is really second to none.

We are not simply relying on eHealth, Mr. Speaker; we have a stepped-care program, which is the envy of the world. Step zero is mental health provided electronically. The other steps will be provided in person.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I assume, somewhere in there, there was an answer to not a single dollar being cut.

Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, Dr. Janine Hubbard raised a question of whether there should be a stand-alone mental health portfolio.

I ask the minister: What analysis has been completed on this recommendation?

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

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

For the Member opposite, he may be interested to know that the percentage of the health care budget that's gone on mental health has actually

increased year on year as part of the targets from *Towards Recovery*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: To address the specifics about organization of mental health portfolios, to quote a very sage hospital administrator who's working currently on Health Accord NL: Let's design the model. You don't pick a wrench, a tool like governance and then build the engine around the wrench, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In Estimates, in response to questions about mass layoffs, the minister said, and I quote: I don't think there is a definition and I can't give you a number on what's mass or not mass. I don't want to get into quantifying numbers.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm there will be job losses. If so, how many?

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

S. COADY: My goodness, Mr. Speaker, he continues to think there's going to be job loss, despite the many times I have said that we are not contemplating job losses.

In fact, there are over 500 jobs within government today that people can apply for. We're going to have about 24 per cent of our core civil service available to go to retirement within the next number of years, Mr. Speaker. We are, indeed, attracting people to come to work in our civil service. We're not anticipating and we're not working towards job loss; indeed, we're attracting people to work in the civil service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I take it from that answer, Mr. Speaker, that there will be no job losses with the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information when it's brought into government, there will be no job losses with 911 when it's brought into government and there will be no job losses with the English School District when it's brought into government.

Mr. Speaker, the chair of the Public Service Commission said in Estimates, quote: The number one issue that's going to be coming up now when all employees return to workplaces across the country is anxiety and mental health issues.

With the Newfoundland and Labrador public service facing so much uncertainty and no details provided in the budget around layoffs, what proactive measures are being taken to support employees who provide vital public services to the people of the province?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I've said, time and time again, it is not government's intent to do layoffs – it is not government's intent to do layoffs. We are working towards modernizing and transforming government. I am sure all of the people in this province – including Members opposite – would want to have the best quality civil service, providing the best quality of service to people in this province, Mr. Speaker. We must continue to transform and modernize, and we will do so.

Mental health is very, very important and within the civil service we have – as was discussed in Estimates that the Member is referring to – the Employee Assistance Program and we look forward to making sure that people in the civil service have access to the services they need should they be suffering from any type of stress or mental illness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the minister also said in Estimates that discussions about returning to work and long-term work from home arrangements are under way.

Can the minister confirm that she has consulted with union leadership in these discussions?

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, as we emerge from COVID everyone fully recognizes that some people can work from home. We will be engaging with discussions, internally and externally, and unions will be involved in those discussions, as we move and transform from COVID-19 to looking at alternate ways of people being able to provide the services that are required by the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Way Forward proposed reducing government's footprint for office space.

I ask the Minister: What action has been taken to reduce its leased building footprint?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's a very important question. At this time, I can say to the hon. Member that we're taking a look at all of our infrastructure and assets that we have within the, I guess, the umbrella of TI and we will do our best in making that assessment for the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government spends almost \$21 million for external lease space aside from the 800 government managed buildings around the province, yet they could not find an office space to accommodate the Premier's Economic Recovery committee.

I ask the Minister: Why wasn't this team accommodated within existing government buildings or leased office space?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important question and I am happy to answer it. I will say, too, the Premier's Economic Recovery Team was an independent committee and we wanted to ensure that they were removed from government. We wanted to make sure that they could operate without any influence of government, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2016, the provincial government has reduced its office-leased space by about 200,000 square feet, Mr. Speaker. We're saving about \$5 million a year because of that. When we went out to look for space for the Premier's Economic Recovery Team, who were volunteers, Mr. Speaker, we had to look for temporary lease space and we did so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last few days there have been a few forest fire call-outs in Labrador West, the water bomber that is normally stationed in Wabush Airport is again being stored at 5 Wing Goose Bay.

Will the minister confirm this service cut and explain to the people of Labrador West why safety is being disregarded and why there will no longer be a water bomber stationed in Labrador West?

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

D. BRAGG: We station our water bombers wherever the need exists. Right now, there are three in Gander and one in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Last week, the hon. minister behind me made a statement, we sent two out to Ontario because we could. We position them in the best possible place given the need.

We're ready to go along with the Department of TI, we're ready to go, we're mobile and if we have any emergency in this province anywhere, anytime, we're ready to respond.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Greene report mentioned cuts to ferry services, and the Premier has targeted the service in the House of Assembly by saying there are 4,000 empty ferry crossings a year.

Will the Premier be forthcoming about the communities targeted for resettlement in the Liberal plan, or is his intention, as he stated, to save the patient by cutting off a limb?

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

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, that was above the top, I think, in the request for information about the 4,000 ferry runs that run empty every year.

I can say that I think every community that is serviced by a ferry looks for modernization, looks for transformation and looks for improvements. We're going out to ask for solutions on how best to provide that service.

I also say to the Member opposite that 4,000 empty runs a year means that something needs to be improved. The cost to the province is about \$80 million, Mr. Speaker, for providing ferry service. I think it'll be important for us to go out requesting solutions for some of these challenges, and we'll be doing so in the coming months.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as has already been stated, Newfoundland Power is seeking a rate increase of 80 cents for every \$100 so they can have a better rate of return for their shareholders. This will represent an unnecessary hardship for seniors on fixed incomes and families and businesses struggling to get back on their feet from the pandemic.

I ask the Premier if he will contact the executives of Newfoundland Power and ask them to be good corporate citizens and withdraw their application.

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

A. PARSONS: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite and I appreciate his concern for seniors. It's a concern that's shared by us all. But I will remind him that as a regulated utility, Newfoundland Power has to file a general rate application every three years. We have no control over that. We cannot tell them not to do it or what to ask for. That's not how it works.

What we do have is a Public Utilities Board that looks at that and acts based on all the evidence put forward. We have a Consumer Advocate, a person, an independent office appointed by this government to represent the interest of consumers. We have to go to this quasi-judicial board to allow the process to play out and we will be watching very carefully.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Consumer Advocate calls Newfoundland Power's rate increase application offensive and will make rate mitigation efforts even more challenging. There are people in my district struggling to make ends meet already, as there are across this province. For those living on fixed incomes the application is indeed offensive.

Will the Premier agree that this application from Newfoundland Power is reprehensible, objectionable and keep his commitment to keep electricity rates stable, affordable and in check in this province?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I would say that we have a process here that's playing out as it's supposed to. Newfoundland Power has a duty under regulation to apply for their rate increase or decrease or for nothing, depending on what they want to do. It's based on the information. They had to file this in the court. This is very similar to me going to a court and telling a judge how to rule. It's a very slippery slope I would say, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, while I think every single one of us in this House can talk about the needs of seniors and the effect of power rates and rate mitigation, the reality is that we simply cannot go in as a government and tell them how to do this process or else we're going to end up in a lot of courts telling a lot of people how to operate. I'm not sure that's a slippery slope that we want to engage on.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on carbon, Bill 21.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to move, and seconded by the Member for Conception Bay South: BE IT RESOLVED that the House urge the government to implement an approach to collaborate with stakeholders so as to directly deal with improving access and removing barriers to mental health and addiction services in response to the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, that will be the private Member's resolution which will be debated this coming Wednesday.

SPEAKER: Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm back today now just to give the specific details to my hon. colleague, the Member for St. John's Centre, in the question that we talked about last week when he said there were cuts to the budget in the department of Women and Gender Equality, which is not true. We have the specific details and I will read this into the record, Mr. Speaker.

In response to a commitment to women and gender-diverse people in our province, this government allocated additional funding to the office's budget into 2020. That funding of \$425,000 was earmarked for projects, such as the expansion of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity, our work on women in leadership and additional grant opportunities, just to name a few.

In *Budget 2020* documents, that funding was all placed in the Grants line. In the *Budget 2021* documents, that funding has now been allocated to the proper initiatives, which could explain for the confusion that the Member may have experienced.

Again, I want to reiterate: Absolutely, under no circumstances, there are no cuts to this department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Petitions.

Petitions

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm presenting a petition again today on the election. I won't go through the prayer, I'll just read the bottom part: Upon completion of the investigation, to table and debate the report in the House of Assembly with a view of seeking accountability for any inappropriate decisions made, and ensuring a legislative review of the *Elections Act, 1991*, is conducted in order to restore the public's confidence in our electoral system.

Mr. Speaker, after people heard me speak last week, and a few others times, on the election in Newfoundland and Labrador, a lot of people were calling me wanting to sign the petition. I'm presenting another petition, I have another one, so I made a commitment that at least twice a week, or whenever I can, I'll present a petition in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the big concern people are hearing is they want answers – they want answers. I understand, totally, about changing the Elections Act and making it more suitable and bringing it into conformity if there is another pandemic. I understand that totally. But that does not give the right to anybody in this province to take the legislation and use it as they see fit.

This is where laws are made in this House of Assembly; laws are made in this House of Assembly. We make laws for everybody, everybody in the province, including ourselves and that we must follow. For an Officer of the House not to be held accountable to answer questions in this House of Assembly shows a lack of respect for the people of this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who wanted to vote, who tried to vote and who did everything proper, but still never received their ballot. It also showed a lack of respect when you can get people, supposedly, Mr. Speaker, getting phone calls and being able to vote over the phone, which no one else can, and supposedly, Mr. Speaker, being able to go up to the Chief Electoral Officer on election day and vote in person when no one else can; to be able to drop off ballots, which nobody else can.

I just want to put this in perspective. There were about 100,000 special ballots this year, or 120,000, and the Chief Electoral Officer, the person responsible, just coincidentally had three or four laid on his desk out of that 100,000, coincidentally. Yet, there are people in this province, seniors and others, who could not get a ballot because they did not have access to a computer and a camera to download a picture. There are many, many people in this province who applied properly to get a ballot but never ever received a ballot and never ever got any reason why they never received a ballot.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent on this House of Assembly to do our fiduciary responsibility and hold the Commissioner for Legislative Standards responsible, to bring him before this House and have an investigation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

The background to this petition is as follows: The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure.

WHEREAS many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work as well as commercial, residential and tourism growth in our area has increased the volume of traffic on this highway.

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke on this several times, I'm going to say in the last session, and I'll continue to do it in this session as well. We travel that road a fair amount. Visitors for sure in tourism going to the district. They'll come into the boat tour area. The marine base, as well, is very important in Bay Bulls and Fermeuse – the proposed one in Fermeuse.

It's very important that this infrastructure – I'm going to say – get looked at. There's about eight kilometres left, I think, in the process to finish the road. Certainly, I would venture to guess, the last time I mentioned that the amount they spend on cold patch during the year would be incredible to – I'm not going to say enough cost to fix the road but over time and over the last 15 to 20 years this certainly should have been looked at.

It's now time to look at it. I get numerous calls from people with motorhomes; not calls, but you meet them on the highways talking about the roads. Motorcyclist, when they heard me make this petition last year, brought out a point to say when they're going on a motorcycle swerving in and out over the potholes and over the cold patch, it's a pretty rough ride to go through.

I think it's incumbent on the government to be able to put this in their budget and keep it on track. Once it's done, we'll have a great piece of infrastructure that will be good for years and

years to come. I know they did four kilometres last year and we are really appreciative of that in our district.

I ask the minister, in his plans, to keep this important piece of infrastructure right on the radar so that we can see the completion of it.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 8,000 residents of the Bonavista area who require a medical procedure in Clarenville or St. John's currently have to drive to Clarenville beforehand to receive a required COVID pre-op testing. Many of these patients are seniors with mobility issues and social services recipients who find the travel physically and financially challenging.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to offer COVID testing in Bonavista, which would negate the requirement of three hours of travel to and from Clarenville in advance of a procedure.

The petition serves to provide a service to the many seniors who have to travel extensively for medical procedures and, as stated, in three hours, some to St. John's. But before travelling for the procedure, many of them of poor health will have to travel, not feeling well, make a trip a day or two in advance of the pre-op or the procedure in order to have this procedure done, or the COVID testing.

We're fully aware – or I am fully aware – that the logistics of the COVID testing, from watching on the news it can be done in the parking lot, it can be done safely in an office. We have available space in Bonavista; we have large parking lots. I'm assuming that we then need to have it transported to the testing, which happens. We have daily transmittal of lab testing in Bonavista to Clarenville and I would think probably and beyond.

The only thing I would say, operationally and logistically one would hope that for the benefit of serving the 8,000 residents in the Bonavista area, we could have that pre-op, that COVID testing occur in Bonavista. We do have the staff and we do have the expertise to offer that test. All it is, is we need the operationalizing of it.

I just heard that Jeff Bezos was planning, when he retires from Amazon, to go on a space rocket to up and away. We're not talking about anything related to Jeff Bezos's adventure; we're talking about operationalizing so the seniors in Bonavista can have their COVID testing in their area. That would save them financially, physically and mentally.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's always an honour to have the opportunity to speak in this House for the fine people who live in my District of Terra Nova. Just a slight overview of the district, my district is made up of about 6,125 square kilometres. While it's not the largest district in the province, it's one of them.

We have 10 LSDs, 11 town councils and 40 communities. The population is 14,275. There are 13 fire departments, all volunteer; eight schools, from primary, elementary to high school; and approximately 1,800 students in the school system. We have one full-time hospital in G. B. Cross and several long-term care facilities, some senior homes and some clinics.

I would argue that my district is no different than most districts in the province with regard to issues that we have. Obviously, we are all struggling with the same stuff. On a daily basis, we're hearing of doctors leaving our district and multiple phone calls from families and seniors alike that they are having trouble finding a family physician. With only one hospital in such a vast district, going to the hospital is not quite as simple as dropping aboard your car in the middle of the night or making an appointment. It just doesn't happen that way.

We have a scenario that we always see where people have had lifelong doctors and those doctors leave. I don't know if it's necessarily a trust issue, but they really struggle to find new doctors and they struggle to get involved with those doctors once they come on board. It's a big issue in my district and I'm sure it's a huge issue throughout the entire province, because we hear about it all the time.

The other issue that we see an abundance of is the inability to get specialists at the hospital. Not just the inability to get specialists; certainly the ability to retain specialists once they come. Government really needs to have a hard look at retention with regard to specialists and doctors in our province. We have beaten it to death.

At the end of the day, we have doctors who come here for a very short time and they leave rural Newfoundland to go to larger centres. I don't know if it's a recruitment issue where we don't take into consideration the spouses or the families that are coming with these specialists when they get here, but we have to put it under a microscope and have a tighter look at it and see how we can get specialists to stay when they come here.

Like every district throughout the province, we have severe issues with roads. I would say, not proudly, but we have a community in our district that was voted to have the worst road in Atlantic Canada. That's definitely not a badge of honour; it's a big deal. We have those issues throughout our entire district. I would argue that the Town of Terra Nova is in desperate need of a new road, but I'd also say that it perhaps might not be the worst road in my district. Anyone who's driven across the entire Island knows that we

have roads in serious disrepair everywhere, but my concern is my district.

We can drive down Southwest Arm and we can see guardrails, I like to say, that are asleep. What I mean by that is we have large sections of guardrail, probably 200-300 metres, which have been lying down on the side of the road for multiple years. It didn't happen this spring; it didn't happen as a result of snow clearing. These guardrails are all lying in towards the road. They haven't been broken off and lying out. I'd also say it's in one of the most treacherous sections of road going down Southwest Arm and it's in desperate need of repair.

We have roads throughout the entire district that are very similar. We have some dirt roads that need regular grading that they don't get. They need class A added. They certainly need calcium and dust control and they just don't see it on a timely fashion. It appears as if the department is undermanned and they don't have the ability to deliver the proper maintenance. Maintenance is the key issue I see with regard to the roads. It's okay to go out and do a repair, but we need to maintain our roads on a regular basis to get to a point where the repairs aren't as necessary.

One of the things that we heard during the budget and throughout all of the conversations over the last two years is eHealth, Telehealth and Internet broadband and cellular service throughout the province. COVID has really brought to light a lot of issues and we've had a lot of conversations in here around that.

I have several communities throughout my entire district that don't have either cellphone, broadband or cellular service. It creates a huge issue and it creates a big span between the children – and not just children in school but everyone. You have seniors who want to utilize Telehealth because there is no other opportunity out there as a result of COVID. We have kids that have been sent home to do schooling at home. Again, they have no access to online education because of the lack of Internet.

There's no question that we have to get better and that is the path forward. Me and the minister had a conversation about it last week in Estimates. I believe there is a plan; it's just how quick can it happen? I think the quickness is

what concerns people throughout the entire province.

In my district, I have areas where it's the strangest thing, high-speed Internet providers actually go right through communities. They actually go through the middle; the line goes right through the middle of the communities. The people that live in those communities don't have access to high-speed Internet. It bewilders me why it's like that but it's been like it for a long time. We've written letters to the providers. We've tried to find a solution and it seems as if there is no solution. To me, it would be one of the easiest and cheapest solutions that are out there; if the wire goes through the community, why not utilize it?

There's a huge uptake. You look at Port Blandford, Long Beach, communities all through Random Island that would love to hook up to this high-speed Internet and they just don't have the opportunity to do it. It's a big, big problem throughout the entire province, but it's certainly a huge problem in my district and one that needs to be addressed.

We've all seen businesses close as a result of COVID. The unfortunate thing is that it's going to take some while to get over this. But the reality of it is that we've had businesses close prior to COVID and we forgot about what was going on before COVID happened.

There are a lot of people out there who were struggling to get ahead. Certainly, from a tourism standpoint we talk about the air access strategy all the time. Air access was failing prior to COVID. COVID certainly pushed things along but it was a big deal. We started losing flights to regional airports in Halifax and other places. Our ability to attract airline carriers here was diminished somewhat. Obviously, it's left a large portion of the industry in peril, because without people visiting, we certainly don't have the way for these businesses to operate on a regular basis.

We announced here this afternoon that we're going to be doing a private Member's motion on mental health. Mental health and certainly hospital wait times are a huge issue throughout my entire district also. It bewilders me how two years ago if you saw your doctor and routine

blood work was ordered, you could have it done the same day. Now we have people waiting two and three weeks for the same blood work.

I understand that with COVID there's a requirement to make appointments and stuff, but those appointments should happen much faster than two or three weeks. If we could keep up with the demand on a daily basis prior to COVID, then we should be able to keep up with the demand with appointments during COVID. It's slipped off the rails. I know cancer patients who have called me who are waiting two and three weeks to get in to get blood work done. It just doesn't make sense. I don't know how we've gotten here but there we are.

One of the big things we heard in the Greene report or the Premier's Economic Recovery Team report talks about collaboration. There's no question, as a government, people have heard me in this House talk about collaboration and our need to get along. Now, that doesn't mean we're not going to sit in here during Question Period or other times and banter and bicker at each other, but that's part of what we do. When it's over we move on and we do our jobs.

I will say since the 27th of March, I've had ministers reach out to me and tell me about issues in my own district. They have called me and they've said: Hey, this is what's going on. You need to know about it. We're calling to fill you in. I'll also say that we shouldn't have to beg for answers and that happens too. There are lots of occasions when I send text messages, phone calls and emails and don't even get the courtesy of a reply. It's a bit ridiculous when we're talking about collaboration and we won't talk to the Members opposite. I would say at the end of the day, as an MHA our job is to represent our district, but it's also to represent the entire province to some degree. As a minister, the job is to represent the entire province there's no question.

If we look at the vote breakdown from the last election, the reality of it is that government received 48 per cent of the vote; everybody else, between the Conservatives, the Third Party and independents, received 52 per cent of the vote. The bulk of the votes were for the people on this side of the room. We have a responsibility to represent this entire province and it's incredibly

important for us to do that. Part of that starts with collaboration and collaboration starts with our ability to communicate.

We need to get past the bickering. That's a part of what happens here. I guess some of it is theatrics and some of it is to get points across, but when questions are asked, they're asked specifically for a reason. They're not asked to question a minister as to whether or not they're able to do their job, they're asked to find answers.

I find it funny that last week it was said in this House it's our moment to come together, and there was Chinese proverb that came out and said: "The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it." I'll say this: Sometimes when questions are asked of the people who are doing it, it's not because they don't think they're doing it, it's because they think there may be a better way to do it.

Those questions aren't asked to alienate people, they're asked to try to find the proper way to do things or a better way to do things. I suggest that if you want to lead, then you need to listen. Questions shouldn't be taken personally; questions are there to find a better path forward.

This province – the people have heard me say in here before – is everything to me. When I joined the military back in 1990 and I left, the very first thing I did was try to find a way to come back here. I love our province. This province is everything to me. To me, I believe that we're lucky, fortunate and somewhat entitled to live here. Not only do we have the best people, but we have some of the best conditions for lifestyle that the country has. All you have to do is look to the current pandemic and how we've come through that to see just how fortunate we are as a people and as a province.

Sadly, we don't take advantage of it. At the end of the day, the future of Newfoundland and Labrador belongs to us all, everybody in this room; it belongs to the people that put us here. We have a responsibility to make sure that we not only better that future but we need to look at what's happening in the present and make sure that we don't make the same mistakes over and over and over again. We do make those mistakes on a regular basis and I would argue that some

of that comes from a lack of communication, collaboration and our inability to listen to what other people have to say.

I will say, while I'm not a minister, if I were a minister one of the first things I would do would be to direct my department that if you get a question from any MHA in this House, then you have a responsibility to get back to them on the same day. If you don't have the answer, just let them know you don't have the answer and let them know you're going to get the answer to them in the coming days. It's important; that's why we're here. We're here to get answers for people.

If I get a call from a constituent, the first thing I do is try and let them know that I don't have the answer and I'll get it for them as quick as I can. Now, if I get a call from a constituent that's in Labrador West, or Goose Bay, or St. Anthony or anywhere, I don't deflect those people back to their MHA. I do what I can to help them and if I can't, I let them know I can't, I give them the numbers to the people in their district, be it their federal or their provincial counterparts, and I try and help them in any way I can. To me, that's our job.

Over the last two years we've seen a really, really tough time for rotational workers. Now, rotational workers are a big part of what the province is and they pay such a huge amount of tax into the province. They don't leave Newfoundland and go to Alberta to work because they want to work in Alberta; they go away from Newfoundland to work because they want to live in Newfoundland. They want to be here. They choose to be here. Right from the very beginning of all of this, certainly, the Conservative caucus was very bullish on point-of-entry testing and finding ways to make things more comfortable for them. I just think that we've really overlooked what they contribute to not only the economy, but to the province as a whole and to who we are.

They go away every two weeks and they represent us. They go away and people want Newfoundlanders to work for them. That's a big deal. When you have companies – when you fill out an application to go to work and a company says where are you from, you say Newfoundland and that gets your foot into the door, that's huge.

It is such a big deal, not just for us as a province, but it's looked upon nationally. It brings tourism and it does so much more from a spinoff standpoint.

The best that we could do for rotational workers in this budget was add a 1 per cent tax onto their pay. That's the best we could do for them; we didn't do anything else. We told them that they had to spend more money to stay here in Newfoundland. To me, it's ridiculous. We haven't even looked at doing anything for them and they're a huge part of what we do.

If they leave – because I don't know about anybody else's district, but in my district I'm getting phone calls on a daily basis from rotational workers who say, when the dust settles, they will no longer live here. They don't want to be here. They say it's costing too much to live here.

The thing is that the economy is suffering everywhere, so these individuals that used to get flown, they didn't pay for their own flights. Now, as a rotational worker, most of them are paying for their own flights. They're paying higher taxes; they're isolating for long periods of time. Why would you want to be here? It's easier for them to live in another province – much easier. They can go and forget about Newfoundland. They can bring their families; they can settle in and they don't have to worry about any of this stuff that I just said. Here we are with an opportunity to look at a bunch of people and say thank you for what you do; instead, we punish them a little bit more.

Again, it's a group of people who have sacrificed so much so they can stay, and government continues to do nothing. This is a province that has it all and, for some reason, we don't want to do anything with it. We miss opportunities all the time.

I look to the oil industry and I look at the West White Rose. It's not gone, but it's just barely holding on by a thread. The Terra Nova: I was pleased to hear the minister today say that he's hopeful. I'm very hopeful, too. If we don't come through, the Terra Nova is on the brink of extinction. If the Terra Nova goes, unfortunately, I believe that has a huge ripple effect on our whole oil economy, an economy, I

will add, that the Greene report says is essential for our survival – essential. An order of magnitude of 5:1 per dollars that come in and are spent – 5:1. There's no other industry in Newfoundland that gives us those types of returns. It's a big deal.

The Henry Goodrich: cold stacked. West Aquarius: cold stacked. The Barents: gone. You look to these rigs, and I tell you, it's the first time, I believe, since 1979 that Newfoundland has not had a drill rig offshore. First time. Right now, Stena Forth is out there doing one hole.

The whole catch with all of that is while it all sounds like there's a whole lot of exploration going on – and I applaud the government's plan for seismic; seismic is huge; it's important; it's a path forward; it gives us a blueprint of what may or may not be out there – we have to be drilling holes. Our exploration has to be expanded. We have to keep up with the rest the world. If we don't, they're going to continue on by us.

If we have a major incident offshore today, we don't have an ability to go do a recap or a work order, because we don't have a rig here that can do that. I don't know about anybody else; that concerns me huge. If we have a blowout offshore, we may not be able to cap it. It's going to take time to do. For somebody to say to me that we could use the Henry Goodrich or the West Aquarius, well, it takes months to cold stack it; it takes a hell of a lot longer to get it up and running – a hell of a lot longer. It's a big deal.

Refinery: I look to the Come By Chance Refinery. Again, very, very pleased to hear the minister say today that – well, he wouldn't say it's good; it's promising and I do believe that there's some hard work going on out there.

We don't have a plan B. I don't know, a lot of people may not realize this, but that refinery made 100 per cent of our propane and 100 per cent of our jet fuel. The first thing is we're all bullish and big on getting air access back, but now we have to start shipping jet fuel in. We don't have jet fuel here. It all came from the refinery. We have to consider that as a part of our strategy to get the air access up and going, we need to be able to supply fuel.

Propane: 100 per cent. Now, we're in a situation where the ferries coming across the Gulf, all of our propane is shipped in via truck. It can't come in via ship, there's no way to offload. I don't know that there are enough trucks on the East Coast of Canada to keep up with the demand. We kept up with the demand initially because the refinery had a full tank out there. Now, that tank is empty so all propane that comes to this province is coming in via truck.

Here's the catch: Every truck that comes in, gets on that ferry to cross the Gulf, it's now TDG. We've got transportation of dangerous goods and we have a ferry that can't be fully loaded. Now, we're going to try and convince tourists to come here. We don't know what our capacity is to bring people to the Island because we don't have propane. We don't know if we can keep up with the level of propane that is going to be required, but we also don't know if we can get tourists to come in via ship. It's a big deal.

Gasoline: Just recently we heard from people at the refinery – there was some talk in the media that it was a switch from winter to summer fuel, but that's just the refinery's spin on it so that didn't sound good. We had a ship come in, I believe the 24th of April, with 52 million barrels of gas. When that ship comes in every bit of that product has to be tested. If it fails, that ship gets turned around. We could have ran out of gasoline at that point.

We need to have a plan B and we don't have it, not one little bit.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy to be critical, and our job, I guess, as Opposition is not to oppose but to look for better ways and ask questions. The one thing I will say is that we need to make better decisions. Twenty years from now, we're going to be a whole lot more disappointed by the things that we didn't do than the ones that we did.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

It's my honour to sit in this House and represent the beautiful District of Ferryland. I certainly thank the constituents in my district for putting me here. It's certainly a great honour to be able to sit here and speak.

I'm going to touch on some budget subjects, I guess, in this section, and I'll also touch on my district as well. So I'll be going back and forth.

First, I'd like to start: I'm going to give kudos to the government when they came out with the ban on plastics last year. It's like seat belt rules and everything else. We talked about masks – everybody adapted to it, now it's hard to get a plastic bag. You're going to bring a lunch in, you don't know what to bring it in if there are no plastic bags around. People have adjusted to it pretty quick. I have to give credit where credit is due on that. I certainly appreciate that.

I get people talking about it all the time and they say: I haven't got a plastic bag for this, haven't got a plastic bag for that. So I think that's a good move, I really do. In the long run, that's going to be a great move.

In my district – and I've touched on it before and I'll touch on it again – one issue along the way would be cellphone coverage. I live, obviously, in Bay Bulls, and I drive Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove right to St. Shott's. Once I leave Tors Cove, I'm going to say the conversation ends there. You either have to haul in on the side of the road to carry on a conversation, or you continue on and call them back two or three times with dead zones. I think it's really important that the government get to – and it's not only my district. There are 40 districts here and everybody has the same issue, I'm sure of that.

But it's very important that we get to that and be able to – you get people with high-speed Internet that are calling you about high-speed Internet. When you're in an area that has it, you're sitting there saying, wow, they can't do it. You have students that are trying to complete university courses, they live in Ferryland and they move out to CBS where their aunt or uncle is to live with them, just so they can get online and be able to do their courses. I think it's incumbent that – at least give us an update as to where it is

or how far we're going to get or what we're going to do in the next little while.

Because sometimes we sit here and we – I've been here two years and I said to one of the guys this morning: I don't know if I used the word collaboration any time before I came in this House. We keep continuing to throw it out there, but I don't see it. We say we're going to collaborate and get together and sort things out. Yeah, there might be some Committees that are doing that, but, generally, it's not happening. The people in all districts have to know that we're here trying to represent our constituents and, I'm going to say, it's not collaboration. Yes, there are certain things that are being done, but there are lots of times you get no answers.

To speak to the Member's point there from Terra Nova, I'm going to say since the election happened and the government in power – and I'm not here to go pick on people. That's not my job. My job is to answer to the constituents that are asking me questions. When they ask me a question, I'll say: Well, I'll see if I can get a hold of the minister. Well, I've emailed or texted ministers, I'm going to say, three or four times – I realize that they're busy. They're the same busy as we are. They're busier than we are because they're ministers, obviously, and taking care of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are previous ministers that I look at, that when I called them they would call you back. Since the election happened, I see a decline in that. Hopefully that gets changed. Hopefully it gets changed because it's important that they get back to us with an answer. If it's no, then it's no, but we need to get an answer. Somebody has called one of us to ask a question, so we're trying to get some answers on it. It is very, very important that they get back to us.

Listen, I'm not saying they have to call you right away, but I'm saying in a week's time if somebody hasn't answered you, it's a long time. If somebody calls me, I try to answer the phone as much as I can, right away. If I don't, I see the missed call and if there's a number there, you call them back. It is important that you get back to people.

I worked in the service industry forever, for 22 years in service and in selling cars. When somebody called you, if you didn't get back to them, you didn't make a living. We're making a living and you have to get back to people. If the answer is no, it's no. Sometimes there are good stories, sometimes there are yes answers to what we're asking and it could be pretty simple, but we just need to get an answer on it. I certainly reiterate what the Member had said there on that already.

I will speak to a cleanup that I had attended a couple of weeks ago I'm going to say. I told them I would reach out. I have a list of 40 names; I'm going to put all the names on record, as some of the Members here say. I wanted to say what a great job they did. There were a couple of young guys that did one section of Witless Bay. There is another group that organized it on Facebook. There were 40 people showed up and some of the same guys that showed up.

I'd like to read some of their names just to put it on record and certainly thank everything they did. I'm going to say they probably had five or six loads of debris that they brought to Robin Hood Bay. We had a company that came in, Newco metals – Newco it is; I don't know if it is metals or not. Newco came in and took all the scrap units that were there; they towed through the woods or lifted with a forklift on the front of a loader. They brought them to a certain point. We had two ministers showed up to see the actual mess that was in the area. It was incredible how much dirt was there. They did a great job; it has been all collected, so I'd like to recognize those people.

The way he sent them to me, I'll read them out. There is: Jeremy Alyward, Jeff Earle, Jacob Hayden, Trevor Croft, Robert Keating, Blake Waddleton, Ryan Waddleton, Justin Payne, Blaine Melvin, Jonathan Carter, Christian Rodgers, Charlie Rodgers, Rick Carew, Brandon Whelan, Tom Crocker, Allan O'Driscoll, Allan O'Driscoll Sr., David Brinston, James Croke, Andy Walsh, Rod Sears, Ron Kavanagh, Terry O'Brien, Terrence O'Brien, Victoria O'Brien, Chris Swain, Bobby Dowden, Kyle Dowden, Nathan Dowden, Chris Guest, Don Drew, John O'Rielly, Vessie Cahill, Steven Ronayne, Darryl Stanley, Eugene Bishop, Peter Maloney and son,

Eugene Carew and Collin Chaytor as well. Those are the 40 people that were involved. If there was anybody that I missed, then I didn't get them on my list. So I apologize if I missed somebody that may have been there and he may not have gotten it as well. I thank all the people that were involved in that cleanup.

In a district issue, I'd like to speak on some brush cutting that was done last year, which was a great help, especially on the Witless Bay Line. I keep talking about Witless Bay Line but it was a great job done on that. Hopefully we can get some areas of the district, especially areas further south down in Trepassey, in the town itself, through the town and just outside the town; different areas along the Irish Loop that need to be done. It's a safety factor for sure and something that should be looked at. It's certainly greatly appreciated.

Certainly, again, it's something else that you'd like to see a list that's been completed or what their plans are on doing it or when we can get on the list. It's a four-year plan – well, it's four years we're going to be here, so hopefully we'll be able to get it done in four years and keep all districts happy. We'd love to see the collaboration on that to get done.

I'll just touch on a budget item. I know that when they won government they're talking about their budgets and saving money and all those issues. When we come back in, the government comes in and names two new Cabinet ministers. Now, congratulations to the two new Cabinet ministers, but to create two new positions, how much did those positions cost for the government? They were done before we got here. Now they create two new ministers and all the people that work underneath them. It's a big cost to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

A lot of people – not a lot of people but there are people that mentioned how do they go about trying to save money? Everybody keeps saying the dire straights that we're in with regard to our economy, but then to go put two more ministers in? I think it was something that – it's not going to change now – you'd lead by example. To go do that, I don't know. It's just something that, I think, should have been looked at and something more thought out than what they did. I don't

know how many million that's going to cost, but I'm sure it's going to be up there. Every penny saved is a penny earned. If you save a couple of million dollars here and there, then very good.

You talk about service and, again, we talk about collaboration and how we're going to get things ironed out. If you go to an emergency – and hopefully it never happens but I have a couple of constituents that go to the emergency department at the Health Sciences. I'll use that as an example. I haven't been there for many years and hopefully I don't be there. But you go over there and you sit down. When you go in the first time, you hear your name called: Good, I'm going in. No, you're only going in to get your vitals and go back out in the waiting room – we all know how that works. But for efficiencies, I just think that somebody from the government should be going over there and sitting in these waiting rooms for seven hours themselves just to see how do we make this better? I don't know the answers.

Listen, I'm not here to criticize again, but I'm just giving you the facts from a general person in the population, what they go through to go through emergency to get served. You go in there and after six, seven hours they get up, leave and go home. That's not good service. In the industry I was in before, if your service was like that, you wouldn't be at the job very long because you'd never make a living. It's just the way it is.

The people that are in charge of these departments, in my mind they have to get out of the building and go over in that building to see what they can do to make it better. That's my opinion. I don't know how to make it better. I had been over there 10 or 11 years ago; I had issues with kidney stones. When you go in, you're going in right away; the service was great. But to go in there at 4 in the morning and there's no doctor coming on until 7 o'clock, well, I wasn't going to be good at the state that I was in at that time. That's only me. That's not life threatening. It felt like it at the time, but it's not life threatening.

You get people that go over there; there are big issues. If you're going in there at 4 in the morning, you have some issues. To wait four or five hours before you actually get inside, I just

think that there's something we can do to make that better. All of our constituents are over there – not all of them; we have constituents who are over there at all times and you'll get calls on that. So it's something that I think we should really be looking at.

I'll touch on rotational workers, because the Member here for Terra Nova touched on that. I think he was reading my paper half the time when I was looking it over. I said he's touching on everything that I was going to touch on, but he did a good job.

Rotational works: We all have them; again, every district has people that work in this industry. International workers are the ones that are really hit hard now because we're sort of in a little – I'm going to say a better area because within seven days, I think, you can get some COVID testing and after the seventh day, if I'm not mistaken, then you're good to go after your test, I think. I haven't been through it because I'm not a rotational worker.

The ones who are international workers – and we come over here and the first response we're going to get is that's a federal jurisdiction. Well, if we're the acting government and we have constituents that are living here and bringing back their tax money, then we should be, as a government, acting on their behalf to speak to the federal government to see if we can get some of these regulations changed.

They are, I'm going to say, the cleanest ones when it comes to COVID. On their job sites, they get tested before they go on the rig; they get tested when they come off. They have to prove their test is negative before they get on a plane. When they hit Canada, they can get on with different people that are coming back here to Newfoundland. We, as a government, really, I think, have to go back to the federal government to see if we can help these people out in their industries.

They come back here and it's very frustrating. They can't go off their land; they can't go trouting. We get people that live in my district, and they can get on their bike and go in the country and see no one, but they're not allowed to do it because they have to answer a phone. That's important. Again, every district has that

issue. I'm sure that all our Members on our side, for sure, have fielded questions regarding rotational workers, and certainly international rotational workers, because the best that we can tell them on our end is that's a federal issue and we can't touch it. Well, we have to help those people, from the provincial end, to try to get an answer.

Listen, I see where Dr. Fitzgerald has these rules, and I couldn't agree more. Sometimes we have to have a little more common sense in looking at some of that stuff. I'm not saying it's not common sense, but we have to have a little more intake in to it to explain the situation. If they're coming from overseas, then why is it that they can't, after seven days, if they're tested negative all the way here – they have more of a chance catching COVID once they come back into Canada than they do coming from over there, because they're tested so often over there. They're tested nearly every three or four days.

I just think it's something, and I really hope that the minister can just help and just speak for the people. Every district has it; every MHA has that issue in their district. That is certainly something, I think, that we should speak on, for sure.

I had the pleasure, I'm going to say, of going out Friday evening. I'll talk locally now, just as entertainers or local establishments, to go out; it's great to see that with some of the new restrictions. I was down to a restaurant, and the place was full based on the restrictions. It was good to see. We were there on Friday night, and the place was absolutely full. It was walk-in service. You didn't have to book. It was that full that people came in through the door, turned around and went back out. I think it's great. I'm sure we all are, as MHAs, supporting our local establishments and our local entertainers, if possible, in any way, shape or form. I really think that's something that we should be looking at.

I'll touch on another one. I keep going back to cleanups, but there is a group that is in the area that's called Avalon Pond Cleanups. They're not only in my district; they've been all over, I'm going to say, the Avalon. They go in and the guy has scuba gear or diving gear. He goes in and cleans out ponds and stuff like that. I'd just like

to like to throw him a little bouquet there. I know that there are people who've sent him some gift cards and stuff like that, and some help for buying some air for his tanks and stuff like that. He's done a great job taking tires out of ponds and beer cans.

I will encourage anyone, if you're off and happen to go camping or troutng – and I'm sure there are people that do all that kind of stuff – that if you can truck it in, you can truck it out. If you bring grub in and you bring plastic in, bring it back out. Put it in your knapsack and take it back, because it's very important. Every time you go somewhere, and I'm sure there are people here after doing it, go somewhere, whether it be moose hunting or whether it be camping or troutng, every time you go somewhere you see cans. It's just the – I'm going to say – old way, but the old way is no longer. So if you can bring it in you should be able to bring it out.

Also I'd like to touch on tourism in my area. It's getting to that time of the year and I'm sure glad I got some call from one of the tour operators. He asked me to pass on thank you to the government for opening up on July 1. He's really encouraged and, hopefully, we'll be able to get our planes and that in order. He was really happy to see this go. They operated last year together. I don't know how they're going to do it this year, I'm not sure what their plans are. But they're encouraged to see that it's going to open up, and, hopefully, we do and that their industry can at least get some sort of revenue generated this year to get back in.

When you go from the Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove to St. Shott's and look at some of the tourism area. It's a big tourism area. I've spoke on it before, and I'll touch on it again that you see these tour buses going when the cruise ships come in. They would be taking people to boat tours and they'd be taking them to the Colony of Avalon. There's a Folk Arts Council up in Ferryland as well.

There are people who come in here, they fly in to do our East Coast Trail. They start on one end and go right to the other. It's amazing.

For anyone that hasn't done it, Mistaken Point is another big gem in our area. There are people

from all over the world. Because it's a UNESCO site, there are people that come from all over this world to go visit that site. I had a minister last year that asked me about the area and she went up and visited. I would encourage people to certainly go look at these attractions. There are some great areas to look at.

When you go down through Petty Harbour, we have some local restaurants down there as well. Zip lining is down there. That's another big attraction. I'm not sure if they operated last year or not, but I was on it the year before. That is a great attraction. It's a lot of fun to do, so I would encourage people to get out all across this province to go look at some of their tourism and stuff like that.

Also, I'll touch on the – well, I did already – East Coast Trail. Like I said, from Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove in our area right up to St. Shott's, Trepassey and Portugal Cove South, they're in doing some trails now. It's not the East Coast Trail but they're in upgrading some trails. They're looking for some help from the government to be able to enable more tourists and more people to go up and take care of that, or to be able to avail of that, I should say.

The other important one, I'll touch on it again; I touched on it once before, would be our fishery. It wasn't mentioned much in the budget but it's a very big industry. I live in an area that there are fishermen, right from Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove, right up to St. Shott's, there are people in the fishery. We have some crab fishermen, they're pretty well finished for this year; some of them, not all of them.

Hopefully, COVID will go away that can help these fish plants process some of this crab. Some of the fishermen, their issue was, that they could only go out on certain days and only bring in so much crab. That's a big issue for those guys. Especially based on the weather and the wind that we've been having since January restricts their time to go out.

I see that my time is up. I'd certainly like to thank the people in my district, again, for putting me here.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

First of all, I would like to say as the Member for the District of Harbour Main, how very sad I was to hear the news of George Murphy's passing. On behalf of the constituents of the District of Harbour Main, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, George Murphy was not only a constituent of mine living in Seal Cove, he was also the Liberal candidate in the last provincial election, running in the Harbour Main District.

I have to recall the afternoon that the election results were released, he called me at home; he called to congratulate me. I thanked him for the well-fought campaign that he ran. It was a campaign that was respectful, that was dignified and it made me very proud to be running with such a formidable, yet respectful candidate.

What really touched me in that phone call, Mr. Speaker, was obviously that would have been a difficult call to make, not having won the election; however, he asked me to pass along his condolences to my husband, John, who had just recently – during the election as well – lost his mother. I really thought that was so thoughtful and so caring, that he thought of others and thought of someone else, despite that moment, I'm sure, of disappointment. Again, I think that speaks volumes of what a caring, kind, true gentleman he was.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to mention that because there are many people in the District of Harbour Main who cared and thought very highly of George Murphy and are thinking of him and his family today.

I want to move on now and speak a little bit about my District of Harbour Main. I will have another opportunity throughout this session to speak about the budget, in particular, but I wish

to focus today on certain issues that are facing the District of Harbour Main.

First of all, I want to, again, thank the people that elected me in the last provincial election; how honoured I am to be here and to represent their interests as we go through the 50th Session of the House of Assembly. I first of all want to recognize the hard work and dedication of the officials that worked on the budget within Department of Finance and within the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

In particular, the Department of Justice and Public Safety, we had our Estimates last week. These were my third Estimates that I attended. In that meeting, I found, after a three-hour period, we were provided with clear, accurate information by the minister and his officials. We thank him for providing that information to us.

I also would like to thank the members of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team who prepared the Greene report; that would be Dame Moya Greene and her team. I do think it's appropriate and necessary to acknowledge and thank them for the hard work and their genuine efforts to weigh-in, as policy advisors, on our financial state of affairs. I think that's something that should be recognized. We thank them. I'm sure the people of the province thank them for their efforts in this regard.

Because I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we have stakeholders, we have experts; we have a variety of stakeholders and policy advisors. We need to have engaged scholarship as we move forward with the very difficult financial circumstances that we find ourselves in.

I believe that as we become more knowledgeable and engaged, more educated about the serious financial issues that we're facing, then, perhaps collectively, through having all of these stakeholders and others to advise, that we will, hopefully, be able to develop a financial plan and a financial future.

I think it's really important that we look at our collective progress. It's been stated that we are all in this together. We've heard that expression throughout COVID and throughout the pandemic. We're in that together and we're also

in the situation of facing the financial problems that we have ahead.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to COVID. Before I get into talking about my District of Harbour Main and some of the concerns and issues that are there – that are worrisome, I do believe that when we look at – with respect to the budget and with respect to the decisions that are being made – that we need to have a common sense approach.

The Minister of Finance did mention this in her Budget Speech that we need to have balance going forward. I don't think anyone would disagree with that. We have to be reasonable. We have to have a common sense, balanced approach. Well, we've had 15 months of the pandemic, that the safety and the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians come first.

On that point with COVID, I've spoken about COVID before when I've spoken in the House of Assembly, we have proven results, Mr. Speaker. The people did what needed to be done. We are smart people. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are smart people. They know what needs to be done. They followed the rules. I think that is important to note.

We see now the vaccines are rolling out. We see the reopening plan, so we do see that there is hope. There's anticipation. There's relief. It seems like we can breathe again, although, albeit with masks on, but we can breathe again.

It is so great to see how people are going to be reunited with family members who live away and who are coming home. I can't imagine what it would have been like, when I lived away, in Ontario, I lived for the time to come home at least once, if not twice a year, to come home to see my parents and my family. To not have been able to do that, I feel for the people. The hardship they had to endure being separated from their families. This is really great that that's going to happen.

On another note as well: people, especially seniors, who have been so isolated and have found this so difficult throughout the pandemic; not being able to be with family members as they would have liked. We are not doom and

gloom. There are many things that we have to look forward to.

Those are some of the things: the vaccines; the travel that we'll be able to do hopefully soon; being reunited with our families and friends, I think that's really big. As well as our seniors being able to see their families and not being so isolated, because we see the hardships that has caused our elders throughout the last 15 months.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to mention with respect to some of the big issues in the District of Harbour Main. This isn't fear mongering, as the government has been quick to respond and say whenever we raise a difficult issue we're fear mongering. Well, the facts are the facts: we have to deal in reality. There is a lot of concern and worry amongst my constituents in Harbour Main and I know from my other colleagues throughout other districts.

The District of Harbour Main has one of the highest numbers of tradespeople working in the oil and gas industry in all of the province, Mr. Speaker. I am hearing and seeing many people that are unemployed throughout the communities and towns of Harbour Main District. I have seen and I have talked to many individuals who are struggling to make ends meet and who are trying to pay the bills. They're feeling the financial stress due to a reduced income. This stress is real, Mr. Speaker. So we're very concerned about the impact upon tradespeople in Harbour Main District and other areas who work in the offshore oil and gas industry.

I think we need to point out a couple of important facts, first of all, when I talk about the oil and gas industry. The increased oil and gas royalties is over \$1 billion; I believe it's \$1.4 billion, to be exact. You know, that's really great. That's good news, Mr. Speaker – wow, that's really good news. I think we need to recognize the contribution that our oil and gas sector makes, the contribution to our Treasury. As well, in 2021-22 the budget forecasts oil prices at \$64 a barrel.

Mr. Speaker, our offshore oil and gas provides promise, there's no question about it. There's promise and hope for jobs for tradespeople in this industry, but the thing is we need to and we

must develop our oil. Yes, we have to develop it responsibly; it makes good, smart sense to pursue responsible development of our oil, period. We can look at the oil and we know that there's a lot of controversy about transitioning to a green economy, but the oil will be with us for perhaps decades to come. For now, the demand is there and I think that is very important for us to recognize.

Today, in Question Period, I listened carefully to the Minister of Energy's responses to our questions, and I have to say, first time in a long time, Mr. Speaker, I feel encouraged. What I mostly feel encouraged about was the tone of the answers, because there was an acknowledgement that we do ask legitimate questions over here in the Opposition. I think that recognition is important because, sadly, I have not felt that so much in the past.

I'm glad to hear that the government is recognizing that these are legitimate questions we ask. We're not asking for the sake of just asking a question. We – each of us – represent constituents. As has been pointed out by the Member for Terra Nova earlier, the Opposition in its totality represents over, I think, 52 per cent of our population. Questions that we ask are relevant, are important and are legitimate.

I was pleased to hear some of the responses from the Minister of Energy today. These are things that I can bring back to my district. The phone calls that I receive about what's happening, for example, with the Terra Nova Project – we know that there are only days remaining until a decision will be made on the future of it.

I take some comfort from the fact that the minister said they are continuing to engage in negotiation talks. Yes, the deadline is June 15, but they're engaging, and talking and speaking to them, and that they've done, quote, everything in our power. Well, that's great. Please, we urge you to continue to utilize that power, to utilize that power on behalf of the people who are working, the workers in the oil and gas industry.

I recognize when asked about the future of the Terra Nova Project – when we asked him what assurances he can give to the people who would work diligently on the Terra Nova for the benefit

of us all, he replied it was impossible to give full assurances, but, again, there's a promise. There's a promise that this government is doing everything it can for a resolution. That's what we have now. It means that we have to trust. We have to trust that our government – this government – will effect a very positive resolution for the people in the oil and gas industry and, ultimately, for the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I think at this point in time I will now move – I have other matters that I will discuss but I'm going to move now a subamendment, seconded by my colleague, the Member for Exploits, that the amendment that was previously presented, the non-confidence motion, be amended by changing the period at the end thereof to a comma, and also by adding immediately thereafter the following words: “and that this House also condemn the government for its failure to demand fair and proper treatment of Newfoundland and Labrador by the Government of Canada as required by the Constitution of Canada.”

SPEAKER: This House will now recess as we review the amendment.

Recess

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Upon review of the subamendment, it is deemed that it is in order.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

I'm going to continue on talking about an issue that is so critical to the people of the District of Harbour Main, in particular the tradespeople who work in the oil and gas industry.

I'm calling upon the Premier and his government and the minister responsible for true leadership. We need to have immediate action. The offshore oil and gas industry, we are facing a crisis. That's not fear mongering; those are the facts. This is very serious. I'm raising this issue on behalf of the many constituents in the District

of Harbour Main and, as I say, in particular the workers who work in this sector.

I mentioned earlier that we have, perhaps, in the District of Harbour Main the highest percentage of tradespeople in the oil and gas sector, in many of the communities and towns of the Harbour Main District. I hear from constituents in Conception Harbour, in Colliers, in Avondale, Holyrood – so many areas – that are deeply, deeply impacted by loss of jobs. There's no denying the stress that they're facing. It's incredible. Mr. Speaker, we all know there's probably nothing really – I mean there are many things worse but it is very difficult when one has to deal with financial stress and strain.

We know that these workers are proud workers. They are hard working. They are skillful. They are experienced; highly technical in terms of their qualifications. But what I am hearing, Mr. Speaker, is people are worried and they're tormented. Many of them have already lost their jobs and are facing very serious financial situations.

I've heard from constituents that are on the brink of bankruptcy. That say they have their backs to the wall. They don't know where to turn. They need certainty. They need some indication that things are going to get better.

Now, when the Minister of Energy was asked questions today by Opposition, he gave indications that he's doing everything that they can. They're engaging in conversations and they're having discussions. They can't disclose to the people because it's a commercial transaction and it can't be discussed publicly.

What we're left with, Mr. Speaker, is trust. We have to trust that they are acting in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The future of the Terra Nova project is in serious jeopardy. Yes, it's true, as we stated earlier, the time is ticking. I think the deadline that the minister indicated earlier in Question Period is June 15.

We do know that this has been ongoing for a long time. The facts are the facts. They failed to secure a deal so far to maintain this project.

People are trying to be patient. We're trying to be hopeful that a solution is going to be found. The minister said today that unless all industry partners can agree – basically he said that Suncor, for example, has given the deadline of June 15. What we are hearing is that unless all industry partners can agree to continue the project, it's going to be abandoned.

Now, that's not fear mongering. That, unfortunately, appears to be what's going to happen. But we are trying to derive confidence from what the minister said, that they're doing everything in their power. They are doing everything in their power to come up with a solution.

I worry and I have to ask the question, we are the Opposition, we are the Official Opposition and it is our responsibility to ask these questions of government: What has the government done to facilitate these discussions? What has the government been doing to facilitate these discussions?

The Minister of Energy has said that they're doing everything in their power, we hear those words, but, Mr. Speaker, surely the government, the minister, has a critical, vital and instrumental role to play to ensure that jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not lost here. Government must make every effort to save this project and utilize every power that they have to make this happen.

The Terra Nova project is the key – I don't think that's an overstatement – to ensuring a good future for the economy of our province. We have, I know, approximately 900 jobs directly – directly – impacted with this project, and that means hundreds of families, Mr. Speaker; hundreds of families rely on this project to maintain their life here in our province. And what about the spinoff? The spinoff employment is crucial and the business loss, the ripple effect throughout the economy will be detrimental.

Mr. Speaker, we need action now. We need to ensure the FPSO gets back in service, as soon as possible, producing oil and sustaining jobs. We have hundreds of tradespeople, they're more than capable of doing this work at the Terra Nova FPSO and they are, right now, sitting at home waiting for the call to work.

We're talking about the budget; this is it, we're into the budget – without jobs our economy will continue to decline. We cannot sustain our province by job losses after job losses. It's just not going to happen.

The people of the District of Harbour Main, I hear from them, especially the individuals and the workers that are involved with the oil and gas industry and the businesses that depend on it, the spinoff businesses. They come, they ask and they say: Please, make our case to government; make sure that they know how important this is.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the oil and gas industry, I think that we will all agree about how important this industry is to the people. When we look at how much, for example, has gone into the Treasury just this year, I believe I indicated it was over \$1 billion – increased oil and gas royalties, over \$1 billion. Wow, that's really good. That is money going into our Treasury.

But we need to also note that we need to ensure the development of our oil. Even the Premier's Economic Recovery Team, in their report to the Premier on the economic future of the province, they criticized. They said when they looked at the federal and provincial governments, they, in effect, criticized the governments – both governments – for not supporting the oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. In essence, what they said is that the window for investment in the offshore has narrowed to as little as 10 years – 10 years. They said: "If development in" – and this was quoted on page 89, I believe, of the PERT report – "the province does not happen within these time lines, considerable wealth will be stranded, hindering the province's ability to improve its fiscal situation and limiting its ability to fund a transition to a green economy."

So there's a lot there, Mr. Speaker – there's a lot. This development has to happen within these timelines. If not, there are serious consequences here. It will hinder our ability to improve our fiscal situation. Of course, we'll all agree a transition to a green economy is the ultimate objective. I don't think anyone disputes that eventually, but for now, we need to support and develop this important resource that we have.

The Greene report agreed and noted that developing our offshore oil and gas revenue is critical to our future. The news about the Terra Nova FPSO is of concern to all of us in this province and not just to the people of the District of Harbour Main.

We're looking to government. We understand. We know it's hard, it's impossible. You can't give guarantees. It's impossible to give a guarantee; it's impossible to give 100 per cent assurances. But if you could give the people of the province – and, in particular, the District of Harbour Main and other neighbouring districts that are directly impacted with the abandonment, if that were to happen with the FPSO – some assurances, at least that would be something, because this is causing considerable stress and anxiety.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just make note of the "Joint Media Statement on the Terra Nova Project" that came out today. This is the statement which was issued: "The following municipalities from the North East Avalon are calling on all the partners in industry and government to invest in our people, our industry and our communities by coming to a resolution that will see the Terra Nova project move into its new life of productivity."

They state that: "The offshore industry has been integral to our social and economic wellbeing. It has afforded us opportunities to cultivate a research and development sector, diversify into new areas of business and technology, presented opportunities to grow our talents and expertise and support our communities through a myriad of social and community programs.

"Like the province our municipalities are committed to economic and environmental sustainability" – and we're all in agreement with that, Mr. Speaker – "and we see these commitments complementary to energy transition.

"The Terra Nova project is important in this transition and has a significant impact on the economic sustainability of all our communities."

There are a dozen or more mayors here who have put their name to this statement, Mr. Speaker, including the mayor of the Town of

Holyrood in the District of Harbour Main, amongst so many other mayors from the Northeast Avalon. If we needed more evidence, which we don't, of how critical this issue is to us now and to the people of the province, we have it here.

Mr. Speaker, the oil and gas industry, it is a vital project that – the Terra Nova I mean. There are so many other aspects to this with respect to the District of Harbour Main and affect the District of Harbour Main in the oil and gas industry but, today, I just want to focus on the FPSO to underscore how vital this is to us now. Time is of the essence. We're running out of time and whatever power government has, whatever influence to make this happen for the people of the province and for the future of our province, we urge you to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak on a couple of other issues: I have many other things I want to say about the budget in particular. I just want to talk about transparency a bit in my last few minutes. What is transparency? What does it mean really? I think a really important question for us to ask is about transparency. One thing I think we need to ask, when we're thinking about that principle of transparency, is did the Budget Speech provide us with a better sense of direction that this government is going to take us in the next four years. Or even in the next two years. Or even this year.

I have to say in answering that question – I don't think I'm alone in answering that question – with saying, no, it doesn't really give me a better sense of what direction we're going. There is a lot of lacking of details and we've heard this – I'm not the first person that said this; I'm repeating what I've heard as well. I don't want to just be critical. This isn't about being critical for the sake of being critical. I just want to stress, Mr. Speaker, what the people want – at least I know the people that I represent in the District of Harbour Main – is more information. That's all. They want information; just keep people in the loop. What is your plan?

How exactly, for example – like the big questions – is government intending to lead our province from crisis to stability? How is it going to happen? Hey, we know these are tough questions and this is not an easy task. My

constituents say to me: Look, this is not easy. This is not easy what you have ahead of you, but we are here and we want to work with you. We are the Opposition. We represent – the Opposition in its totality over here, including the Official Opposition and all Opposition Members – 52 per cent of the population of our province, so when we speak, we speak on behalf of those people. We want to debate with you and for you to engage us.

I think we have reasonable and fair questions. As I indicated earlier, I sense that often there's this defensiveness and there's this dismissiveness, sometimes arrogance, from government when we ask ministers questions. Mr. Speaker, we ask questions not because I want to ask – if you have the answers, that's great. We all want to know what the answers are. We ask reasonable and fair questions and it's our responsibly to ask those questions, but it's also government's and the ministers' responsibly to answer them and to tell us exactly what your plans are.

We need a true picture of the fiscal forecast that the government is basing its decisions on. I've asked questions of the Minister of Justice about Estimates and how decisions were made; for example, with respect to the NL911. We need to know what you're basing your decisions on, that's all. People expect us to ask those questions and we have a right to know, to be fully informed of the options and of the choices that government is considering; for example, to meet its forecasting targets. Why do we need to know that? Because it is important for us to have meaningful input in the choices that are being made. I urge government to consult with us. We represent the people of the province. We must be responsible stewards of our taxpayers' dollars.

The perception is – and I hear it from my constituents – with responses to questions that we ask in Question Period, I mean, the defensiveness and arrogance at times. But when government is refusing to answer questions, it looks bad on all of us. We are here to set examples. When government is refusing to show specific details of how they're going to, for example, reduce expenditures, that's not good enough. It's not good enough for you to just not answer the questions. Do you know what it does? It makes all of us over here and the people

that are watching, the public, feel very concerned about the financial path that the province is on.

Don't leave us in the dark. These are important decisions which require discussion, investigation, debate and, yes, even argument. We're here to support you. We are in this together. Yes, we are. I think that if we work together collaboratively, collectively maybe we can make some real great progress.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As it is with all of us, it's a pleasure to speak on behalf of the residents in our districts. I realize that 20 minutes doesn't last very long so I'm going to try to cover as many aspects of that time that I possibly could.

One thing I would often state is that we underestimate how many people watch the proceedings of the House of Assembly. In my journeys around the district, I'll hear people say: Well, I watch it all the time. Whether it be Randy and Bev Goodyear in Burgoynes Cove – which many of you would know as the site of the B-36 bomber that crashed there some time ago on Route 232; Beulah Ayles in Bonavista and then it's Harry Faulkner who coached many of the games with the Bonavista Cabots at Cabot Stadium, who is a phenomenal volunteer – who later, I would hope that will be nominated for the Order of Newfoundland. They're all watching.

Two things for the residents of Bonavista before I get into the items. I attended a Rotary session back in 2019, Northeast Rotary Club and who they had presenting was Ed Hollett. I never heard Ed speak but I read his blogs. I attended that session, a dinner, with my cousin. When they addressed him as the main speaker, he got up and he threw out a question for the audience. He said: What does 1969 mean? What does it mean to you? Well, I knew I was in some

company that it would have meant a lot in '69 as I looked around the room, but I immediately thought of Woodstock. I said: Well, Ed can't be talking about Woodstock. Then I knew the Montreal Expos started back around that time; I think that might be close to '69, the Montreal Expos. I knew that Pierre Elliott Trudeau was the prime minister at the time. He was a rather flamboyant character. I knew that might be newsworthy of where he was.

All those things that were going through my mind, and then the moon landing. Eventually, nobody stated either one of those, and I'm sure glad that I didn't mention either of those possibilities. What he was referring to was the Upper Churchill contract. We all should have known.

I just had a discussion in our recess a short time ago: What does the Upper Churchill mean to us as Newfoundlanders, to residents on the Bonavista Peninsula, the Upper Churchill coming back to us at today's rates? Well, the minister may be able to give an exact number shortly, and I haven't heard it during Estimates, but I would think revenues to the provincial coffers of between \$800 million to \$1.2 billion per year.

Mr. Speaker, that's coming back to us in '41; '41 might seem a long time away, but that's something that's a light at the end of our tunnel that the residents of the District of Bonavista can look forward to. If we had \$800 million to \$1.2 billion coming in from the Upper Churchill in our revenue sheet, I think we would all say we're in good shape. That's something to look forward to. The caution would be, if Hydro-Québec owns 34 per cent of it, we own 66. Let's make sure we don't reduce 66 per cent on what we own and make sure that we hit '41 having 66 per cent of that asset for the benefit of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That I would say.

A second thing I also want to mention for the residents of the District of Bonavista is that we go through a process during Estimates, Mr. Speaker. The people in the District of Bonavista, as keen and as astute as they are, they may not know exactly what Estimates are. Estimates are the process during the budgetary sitting of the House of Assembly where each area, whether it

be Tourism, Fisheries or Finance, will have probably a three-hour session where we get to ask questions, looking at each budget line that would be in that department. That's a wonderful experience and we get a chance to learn a lot.

One thing I want to tell the people in the District of Bonavista, personally, that I can share with them, is the quality of the public service employees that we have. Those that sit before us in those Estimates sessions and respond to our questions, they are phenomenal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would say we should tip our hat to the individuals at this level that are steering the departments. The onus is on us as MHAs to make sure that we make a case for these individuals and the ministers on things that we think ought to be changed. We do have a lot to celebrate in our human resources within the department.

I think the minister had stated in Finance that we had 500 positions that we are looking to fill. If the calibre of what I've seen in these Estimates sessions is any indication, I would say it is not an easy process, because we want to have the most skilled people to be able to work for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to raise now a couple of issues that are specific. I have a gentleman who is disabled in the District of Bonavista. There are several, but I want to talk about this one particular gentleman in Musgravetown. He was working and pulling a good salary in the gold mine in Yellowknife when he had a biking accident. He is now a paraplegic. I refer to him as differently abled and this guy, I did a Members statement on him some time ago because we celebrate. Even though he's in a wheelchair, he has very few limitations and inhibitions. He is a model for somebody with perseverance to rise above the accident and what he endured.

We have a copay here, so he had insurance. He had money saved up that he didn't need to purchase his house, but when he had the accident, catering to his needs at that time – whether it be the ostomy bag, whether it be the wheelchair, transportation – he depleted what money he had and right now his salary comes in

at \$102 above what the copay would be for our province – \$102.

Because he is on the other side of the threshold, this gentleman now will have to pay for his wheelchair on his own. As industrious as he is, he goes out and clears snow in his wheelchair. He hunts, to the best of his ability, in his wheelchair. His wheelchair is in need of replacement, but he can't afford it

I would say while the concept of copay, I fully understand where it is, if we have a gentleman in Musgravetown that finds that he is pushed into experiencing poverty – we have a fish plant worker who continues to work for his medical supplies, and just above that threshold as well – that is probably some aspect that we ought to be looking into to see if we can do it a little better. One obvious suggestion would be to raise the copay level.

In conversations with him, we thought if you raise the copay level to \$70,000, he ought not to be able to live in poverty. The ability to want to go to work is there.

The plant worker in Bonavista that I had a conversation with that would fall in that category, if he opted not to report to work, if he opted not to go to work, then we know what happens then. But because he goes to work, the majority of what he works for is to pay his medical bills and he's living experiencing poverty.

The election was not that long ago in the District of Bonavista, as you all know. We went through and there was a chance at social distancing apart to discuss with individuals what they saw to be concerns. I want to share one thing that came up in that discussion. They talked about the weigh scales in Goobies. When they looked at the weigh scales in Goobies, he said: Who would ever imagine – and two of these were transport truck drivers. One remains currently, and his name is Carl Matthews. The other has since retired. His name is Jeff Penney.

The two of them talked about pulling out of the Goobies weigh scales and heading west. A transport truck that pulls out, crossing eastbound traffic travelling at 100 kilometres per hour and you pull out. Anybody who has driven through

Goobies, which most here have, would know that quite often Goobies is socked in with fog. That adds another element to it as well.

One would think the Goobies weigh station is one thing that ought to be looked at. These two gentlemen wanted to alert me, as their MHA, to pass it along, Mr. Speaker, to the House of Assembly for the minister at least to consider and address. At least to look a little more closely at that.

I'm tempted to talk about a walking trail in Bonavista and I want to tell you about Janie Phillips. If I have time, I'll tell you a little bit about Janie.

It came up a short time ago. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and, I think, the Government House Leader endorsed it as well, and that's the use of our schools. The taxpayers put the schools in the communities that we have all over our districts. If we have children and seniors that are out there, those schools need to be available for the residents in the communities that the schools serve. Unfortunately, for quite some time we've been hearing about impediments or roadblocks to accessing these schools.

I passed on to a group in my district – and I won't tell where the community is, but they run and they have 77 children on a summer program. At my prompting, I said: Go use a school. It's a better facility and I said: Utilize a school; you apply. Jim Sinnott, who is the director of facilities and custodial management with the English School District, is fully on board.

So she went and inquired. She got a memo back that she sure could; her application was accepted. The cost was \$2,100 to utilize a school. I would say I didn't quite envision that cost for a recreation group dealing with children in the summer months of which the school would be housing and working with. Twenty-one hundred dollars is a fair piece, knowing it's a public building and it's for the children which the school serves.

I just wanted to throw that out there, because the Department of Education now shortly will be looking after the school in part, and this is something for consideration going forward.

One, we need them accessible, and the other thing would be that I would surely like to think that we ought to be able to provide them for free of service. If not for free, it would be to cover whatever expenses that the school would have, whether it be caretaking. I don't think they have that, because my experience at Clarendville Middle School was that we didn't need caretakers; the groups looked after themselves and the school was cleaned at the end of August for the children. There was no added cost for us. Heating was no added cost; it was just the use of the facility and they looked after it.

Education: We talked about the K-to-12 education, and in the budget it talks about creating a healthier population. I stand to be corrected; I think by 2050 we will have the healthiest population in Canada. That is a good goal. I'm supportive and on board. The only thing I would miss sometimes is why do we not talk about working with the school system to make sure that for those new entries, for the next 30 years, we want to make sure that we are doing the best job we can for all of those people and those young kids moving out, that they will be the healthiest that they possibly can be. I've always contended that healthier people make better learners. I can't give you a lot of research, but it does seem to be something that may fit.

What we have in Newfoundland and Labrador is the school district and the Department of Education will have a recommended minimum allocation of 6 per cent for physical education in our schools. Our future citizens that are going to be the healthiest in 2050 in Canada and we have 6 per cent. Six per cent, if you did the math, on a 300-minute school day is 18 minutes.

I would say there is not one school in Newfoundland and Labrador that has physical activity or a physical education class every day of their school day – it doesn't happen. So the 18 minutes from one day and 18 minutes from another day leads to 36 minutes. What they do is that you're lucky if every second day they have 30 minutes, and I'm thinking of elementary; I would say they fall under 6 per cent.

Years ago, when we were at Clarendville Middle School, we strived to have the academic results that the budget wishes and we all desire. We want to improve critical thinking, we want them

to be better critical thinkers and I think the school as a system is doing a wonderful job. It's doing a wonderful job. Is there room for improvement? You bet, and there always will be room for improvement.

We did a search, a jurisdictional scan across Canada, to find out who is pulling off the results on the PISA, on those standards. It's Alberta and BC. Alberta and BC have the standards and the results, Mr. Speaker, that we desire in Newfoundland and Labrador for our school system. We want what they have, but I would ask this: Is it by chance that when we look at the physical activity or physical education in the country, the two provinces with the highest incidence of physical education are Alberta and BC? One could say: Well, what a coincidence, the two provinces with the highest amount of physical education for their children have the highest academic results that we have.

I would say it's not a coincidence. They have what is called Quality Daily Physical Education. If we want to look at us being the healthiest population in 2050, then I would say to you that is something we ought to look at, going forward, is our school system. It ought not to be 6 per cent; it ought to be an absolute minimum of 10 per cent. Let's see what happens there. It will certainly bring us closer to achieving our goal.

I know everyone is anxious here and I know you want to know about Janie Phillips, because if I had to wait for another time, you will be all out of sorts. There's a trail in Bonavista called the Klondike Trail. It goes from Spillars Cove down to Elliston. It's about 6.3 kilometres.

Back in the '40s, there was a young girl leaving Bonavista to walk down along that trail, and it was called the Cable John Cove. As she was walking down to babysit for the Streets, who were drying their salt fish at that time, she went over the 200-foot embankment. Two hundred feet of cliff she went down over. She couldn't recall one thing about it, Janie didn't know, but she didn't suffer one mark. Not a mark did she suffer.

When the fishermen picked her up on the beach down below, she was disoriented, but she was fine. She ended up having seven children. In the 30 seconds I have left, what they suspect

happened to her was she had a dress on. The only thing they can ever imagine was the wind, at that point in time, might have parachuted her down to the beach below.

I would say that when you do the hiking trails in the District of Bonavista, I would suggest the Klondike Trail between Spillars Cove and Elliston. Ask one of the people like Eric Abbott all about it and he could point out where Janie went over. I'd love to be able to tell you more, but my time is up, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to try to top that one.

Mr. Speaker, always a pleasure to speak in this hon. House. Of course, this is the subamendment so this will be my third and final opportunity to speak on the budget, in terms of the budget motions. I think there will be some Committee that we'll get to. I certainly look forward to having a lot more to say when those opportunities present themselves.

Before I start, Mr. Speaker, I think I would be remiss if I didn't mention a good friend to us all, our former colleague, George Murphy. I have to tell you when I heard the news on Sunday morning it was just like someone ripped my heart out. Honest to God.

George was one of those people, I think, one of those personalities that was larger than life. Anyone who had the pleasure of serving with George in this House of Assembly or knew him outside the House of Assembly could certainly attest to his strong moral character. Other Members have said it and other people have said about his infectious laugh and always looking at the bright side of things. His certainly had that sense of fair play in this House of Assembly. He was always a gentleman. He always was very thoughtful in his commentary.

We are all going to miss George. There is no doubt about it. He made a tremendous

contribution to this House of Assembly; he made a tremendous contribution this province. Helped an awful lot of people along the way, whether it be through his advocacy in terms of oil and gas and giving everybody the heads-up. I think it's been said how much money collectively have the people of Newfoundland and Labrador saved at the pumps because of George Murphy. I wouldn't want to quantify it, but I would suggest it was an awful lot of money for sure.

Beyond that, I think the legacy that George has really left is that he's pointed out to us all, I think, that there are a lot of good people in the world. Sometimes we can become cynical, particularly in politics, but George always reminded us of that, that there are good people out there. George was certainly one of the good guys for sure. As I said, we're all going to miss him.

Here's to you, old buddy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, before I get into a couple of things I want to mention as well, I just want to put a shout-out to one of my constituents. I think the former Member for – what was the district called? The Burin Peninsula, anyways. I forget the name of the district. He used to always say: She's done it again, Mr. Speaker, she's done it again. He would be referring to Kaetlyn Osmond, of course. I just want to throw a shout-out and just say he's done it again, in terms of one of my constituents, and that's Liam Hickey of Southlands. Liam has been chosen, once again, to be on Team Canada for the world Paralympic Games.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: We certainly want to wish him all the best in those endeavours. He's certainly been a great ambassador for the sport and, certainly, for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We're very proud of his accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, I also just wanted to mention, I suppose, in terms of some of the commentary that was brought up by my colleagues from Terra Nova and from Harbour Main and the importance of the oil and gas industry to our

province. I know that when they're making these comments they're doing so on behalf of the people they represent, because those two districts, in particular, will be devastated. I think our whole province would be reeling if we're not successful in a lot of these negotiations. I know that in those two districts there are a lot of people who depend on the oil and gas industry, they depend on the Come By Chance oil refinery, Bull Arm and so on for their livelihood to be able to support their families. So I'm sure they're getting lots of calls, as they say, from constituents of theirs. I guess, I just want to just throw my voice into it as well just to say that anything that can be done should be done.

I'm not questioning for one second – I take the minister on his word that he is doing everything that he can do. I really believe that, because when you think about it, why wouldn't he? It wouldn't make sense. To suggest that the minister and the government would not be doing everything they could to try to salvage Terra Nova, to try to salvage the oil refinery and to get our oil industry on track, it just wouldn't make sense for us to even suggest that they wouldn't want to do that. It's impacting our entire province, including their constituents, and we can see the devastating impact it can have and is having on our budget and our ability to be able to afford critical services for all districts throughout this province. So I do take him at his word when he says he's doing everything.

I understand that he can't negotiate in public. I do appreciate that, but I also appreciate the fact that these two Members in particular and all of us, certainly on the Opposition side, we have a duty and a responsibility to bring forward concerns on behalf of our constituents. I know those two Members in particular, as I say, their constituents are particularly hard hit by this and I'm sure we all support them in their effort to keep that attention on this very important issue.

I certainly wish the minister all the very best in his deliberations. I hope he is successful. There would be nobody any happier than me –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: – and I'm sure all of us. If he did a press conference tomorrow and said I got the deal and Terra Nova is back on track, or Come

By Chance is going to be up and running, we would all cheer him. I wouldn't care about the politics. I couldn't care less about it. But I'm sure we would all be on board because it's impacting all of us. It's impacting our entire province. We know the hole we're in financially and we need to get our oil and gas up and running again, we really do. It's critical to our future.

I know there are people out there, people in our province, that I've heard from and I know other Members, I'm sure, have heard from that are like: Shut down the oil and gas, it's over, bury it and so on. They're obviously saying we need to be moving on to green initiatives and so on, but it's not that simple. We know it's not that simple. I'm sure there's nobody here in this House – I don't think there is – I know I don't deny climate change; I think it's a real issue. All you have to do is look at the last number of years and you can see the storms are getting worse, you know, which has impacted our province.

We all know, I think, that climate change is a real issue, but we need time to transition and we have this resource off our shores that will help us to transition. The thing we have to remember is that the world is not coming off oil tomorrow – it's not going to happen. There is going to be a window of opportunity and there's still going to be a significant period of time where the world will still be dependent on fossil fuels.

As government has said, and I agree with, at the end of the day they're going to need oil from somewhere and it may as well be from our offshore. Particularly given the fact that we have some of the cleanest – I know that's relative when we talk about cleanest, but comparatively speaking, the cleanest oil and gas resources on the planet, so we're told. I think it's very important that we capitalize on what we have and transition into, hopefully, a greener economy in the future.

To my mind, though, one of the biggest issues we have – in saying that, just staying on this track, again, for just another minute or so. While I do believe that the minister is doing the best he can with what we have, what I'm not hearing a lot from is our federal government, unfortunately. I'm not hearing much. What I am

hearing from the federal government, from my perspective, is not the positive news and certainly the action we would like to see. I know they did give us that fund that we could utilize for the oil and gas, but I think there's a lot more they could do.

I think it was in the media. I believe the Official Opposition got a hold of a piece of correspondence saying that the government offered up a 15 per cent equity stake in Terra Nova. Why can't the feds come on board? If that's an issue, why can't the feds come on board for 15 per cent? They had shares in Hibernia. They made a killing off of that over the years and made a fortune off of it. It's not like it would just be like throwing money down the drain. This is an opportunity for the federal government to actually make money, as they did off Hibernia, and at the same time help save our industry.

I don't feel that Ottawa is truly an ally in this. I believe there's an ideology in Ottawa that is basically against oil and gas, and that's a problem for us. I certainly encourage the minister – I don't know if this has even been discussed about the federal government taking equity shares, as they did in Hibernia, but it's something that should be brought forward, I think. If that could be the tipping point to make this happen, then let's not let Ottawa off the hook. We're a part of a federation. We have seven MPs. I haven't heard much out of them.

The kicker is, which is pretty unbelievable when you think about it, the federal minister responsible for that industry is a Newfoundlander. If there was ever a time that you would think that the deck would be stacked in our favour, it should be now. It really should. But I'm just feeling that enough is being done. I'm feeling that the federal government is being let off the hook here.

I don't know what discussions the minister is having with his federal counterparts, with the federal government, but if that's what it takes, it's going to benefit the entire country. It's going to benefit this province; it's going to benefit the entire country. They really need to get on board in a bigger way than they have. We cannot let them off the hook – cannot.

Too often we've heard people reference the silent seven. I've heard that so many times. It's not wrong. I haven't heard a lot from them on any number of issues. I don't think they know the fishery exists, to be honest with you. But anyway, I digress.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to just take a few minutes to reference something that came up in Question Period. It was raised by the Official Opposition and the NDP. It was about Newfoundland Power. I've seen some confusion in the general public, the difference between Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland Hydro, Nalcor and so on. Some people like to throw it all together as one entity and so on, which we know here it isn't.

What we're talking about here with this rate increase application by Newfoundland Power, first of all, it's a privately owned company, part of the Fortis Group of Companies. It was actually the original. I believe Newfoundland Power was the original company and then Fortis kind of grew from it, and now Newfoundland Power is a small part of the larger Fortis Group. It's a private company with private shareholders. If you look at the shareholders, a lot of the shareholders are the banks. A lot of them are the banks and so on.

What we're talking about here in this rate-increase application – they're enjoying 8.5 per cent return on investment, guaranteed. Guaranteed money. We're not talking about going to the stock markets here and taking a risk. This is guaranteed return on investment.

My understanding, from what the Consumer Advocate has said, I think it's the highest return on investment of any other utility in the country. They already have the highest return on investment is my understanding, the highest. Guaranteed money. That's not good enough for them. 8.5 per cent is not good enough. Now they're looking for 9.8 per cent so they can put another \$30 billion over the next three years in the pockets of their shareholders. That's what we're talking about.

When Newfoundland Power put out their release, as the Consumer Advocate said, they talked about the need to make improvements and to upgrade their systems, blah blah blah. Never

was there a mention of return on investment. They conveniently left that out. This amounts to nothing but corporate greed. It's as simple as that. There's no blunter way to say it, no clearer way to say it. It amounts to nothing but corporate greed and gouging of consumers. That's what it is, a total gouge. It's disgusting.

People still don't know where we stand on rate mitigation and what impact that's going to have on our electricity rates. At a time when people are sitting on pins and needles wondering about electricity rates and wondering about rate mitigation. At a time when our province is in such terrible financial shape that we're talking about shutting down certain services, combining services, raising taxes and everything that the government has to do – a lot of unpleasanties.

At a time when all of this is happening and people are struggling to survive, a lot of people who have lost their jobs and so on through the oil and gas industry and other industries; at a time like this, we have a bunch of fat cats that are coming out saying: Oh, 8.5 guaranteed return on investment, the highest in the country. That's not good enough for us. Nah, let's give us another \$30 million to put into our offshore bank accounts that we can avoid paying taxes on. This is what we're talking about. It's absolutely ludicrous.

Now, the minister, in reference to a question, said they have to put in their application. Now, I'm not sure if that's right or not. I'm going to take him on his word for that. Again, if he said that's the way it works, fair enough. But guess what? They tried this two years ago, the same thing. They wanted to go from 8.5 to 9.8. Guess what? They withdrew that part of the application. They might have put in their application, as they may be required to do every three years, but the part where they were looking for that increase to go from 8.5 – I think they were going from 8.5 to 9.5; I think they're throwing in a few extra points this time.

Anyway, whether it was 9.5 or 9.8, they tried it two years ago and the people stood up to them. There was a ton of public pressure and they withdrew. So they can withdraw again. Shame on them for trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and to gouge people at a time when we are in

such financial straits. Shame on them. It's absolutely disgusting, that's what it is.

I understand the government can't go telling the PUB what to do. I get that, too. I understand there's a process and that. I'm sure Mr. Browne – or should I say the Consumer Advocate. I'm not supposed to say his name. He has pledged that he will do everything he can to fight this tooth and nail and I hope he does.

I encourage all Members here to talk to your constituents and let's do like we did the last time, when it got beaten back. Go to their email for Newfoundland Power and fill it up. Let it go viral. They had a thing, Newfoundland Power, last time, rating them. It was a rating thing that they had on their Facebook page and they were at a nine out of 10. When we were finished I think they were down to one out of 10. Guess what? They got rid of their rating scale; it is no longer there. They had to take it down because they were getting bombarded and they were getting thumbs-downs like you wouldn't believe. We have to do it again.

I am encouraging everyone in the province and I'm encouraging Members here to get you to engage your constituents and fill up their email boxes, fill up their phone lines, call *Open Line* and talk about how disgusting this actually is. How disgusting this is and it needs to be stopped.

Certainly, all I can say, as the last time, thank God it got beat down. Thank God for people like Lori Moore, Keith Fillier, James Murphy, Matthew and Alicia Della Valle. These are people who were out protesting outside the PUB. These were people who actually went as a witness and participated in the hearings. Newfoundland Power got the message and they withdrew the application. It needs to happen again. I encourage everyone in this House to do all you can to facilitate this happening again this time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I appreciate the opportunity to speak here once again today.

Before I get started, I just want to send out a congratulations to every graduate across the Island for the 2021 class.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: It is too bad they don't get to celebrate in the traditional sense. We all did back in our day. It was a great evening, great weekend, but unfortunately because of COVID, they don't get to do what they want. I just want to recognize their hard work that they put in over the past – well, since they started school, I guess, and especially in their Grade 12 class. I hope you enjoy whatever celebration you do have and hopefully we are back to normal soon enough.

In 1994, I entered the House of Assembly for the first time in my entire life. I think it was in a different place at the time. I sat in the gallery with a friend of mine. He asked me to come in here and just see what he called the circus. He said: Do you want to come see the circus? I thought to myself: Well, why do you call it a circus? When I got in here and between the banter and the entertainment and stuff, it was quite the circus. Some days it seems the same way in here.

I sit back and I think to myself: Well, how do we make it less of a circus and more of a Legislature sometimes? The word collaboration continues to come up again and again. Sometimes it seems like we're going in circles, whether it be us questioning, not getting the answers we were looking for and so on and so forth. It can get exhausting sometimes, there's no doubt about it.

But I think to myself, if there was a monster that came to Newfoundland and Labrador trying to take away what is most essential to our people, we would work together; anybody would work together at that point to fight against this monster, because it would be like a foreign object or a foreign entity coming in to take what we hold as sacred here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're not far off, because the monster has arrived. It's just reared its ugly head in a different form. That monster equates to our economy, our mental health and our poverty. Again, it's generations in the making. I'm not for a second going to sit here and point across this floor because it's generations in the making; many people, many men and women long before us. I just think that it's something that we need to work together to fight against this monster that has entered Newfoundland and Labrador now. It took some time to get here, but it's here and it's sweeping over the province like a blanket. It's going to hurt us if we don't work together even better.

I give kudos where kudos is deserved. I messaged one of the ministers across the way for Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. I sent him an email on Friday evening. It must have been about 3:30, if not close to 4 o'clock; 15 or 20 minutes later I had a phone call back and we resolved the issue. I look forward to more collaboration like that with the government. Again, in order to fight this monster that's going to start to take over all of our lives here, we need to make sure that we do work together and I look forward to doing it.

The fallout if we don't fight against this monster together comes in different forms as well, if we don't get a handle on it or keep at bay. Trust me, it's out there and it's a growing, growing monster that tries to take over our lives.

Outmigration: It's going to become a huge issue here if we don't get our affairs in order.

Rotational workers: Somebody alluded to it earlier, the rotational workers, they're out. We have 20,000 or 30,000 of them in the province. What keeps them here? Well, I was a rotational worker. What kept me here? Safety and security for my children and my family was huge. Of course, traditional bonds, and I was just proud to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. I just loved being home and with my family. Those are some of the things that kept me here. Hunting and fishing, of course, the great outdoors.

But if we make it difficult for rotational workers to be here, how much easier is it for them to pick up and move away? They're already away. I

know myself, I flew back and forth to Western Canada for 17 years. I never had a plane ticket paid for me. I paid for every single one of them. When I first started it was about \$229 one way. Now, you're not getting anything less than \$500 or \$600 one way. That's a huge benefit of moving away that these rotational workers would have an extra \$1,000 or \$1,200 in their pocket each month and, of course, lower taxes.

Again, I need to recognize the rotational workers that take in the revenue that they take in. It's absolutely amazing. I know it goes unnoticed a lot by the province – by the people of the province – but if it wasn't for these rotational workers, you pick up 20,000 of these people and their families and their spouses possibly working here in Newfoundland and Labrador, b'y that's a big gap to fill. I want to recognize our rotational workers, both internationally and nationally. Thank you so very much for doing what you do. Trust me, this is your home and we want to keep you here so we'll work very hard to keep you here.

Part of my portfolio is Population Growth. First of all, we need to sustain the population that we have and ensure that the people that we have here want to stay, but they won't stay if they don't have jobs. Then, from there, we need to focus on population growth, immigration; getting more people to come here.

It's just a fundamental question: Why? Why would anybody like to come to Newfoundland and Labrador? There are a million reasons but we need to get that out there. We need to build on that, those positives as we move forward.

The skilled trades people we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador are phenomenal; hardest working people in the country. We need to make sure that we keep them here as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: At any time, any of these skilled trades people, they know they can go away and get \$15 extra an hour. But what keeps them here? We need to make sure that we keep them here and we pump out more skilled trades people. We need to have work for them at the end as well.

Again, I come back to our community benefits agreement. I'm being told that we are working on it, which is absolutely great. I'd love to be part of those conversations as well, because I do have something to add. I hope when the time comes I am part of those conversations, we're all part of those conversations because, like I say, we have something to add.

None of it works without jobs. We need to keep jobs here and we need to create more jobs. How do we do that? We go after different investments. We make it attractive here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Whether it be our offshore oil – and to not have any rigs outside right now, it is tough. It's nobody's fault. It's the way it is. I know COVID does have a big part to play in that. But we need to get back on that horse, see what we need to make our province just as attractive as other places throughout the world where somebody would want to say: Do you know what? We want to come to Newfoundland and Labrador. We want to do business with you. I'm sure that'll come. I guarantee you, like the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands said: By God, I'll be standing up and clapping and cheering. I can't wait for that because I know how many families that it affects in the end. I'll be looking forward to that.

Health outcomes is another one that stems from this monster that crept up on us now and sort of blanketed us. Health outcomes, yes, COVID definitely has a lot to do with it, but we need to ensure that our seniors are taken care of; our persons with disabilities are taken care of and we have the proper health outcomes.

I'm dealing with a lady in Grand Falls-Windsor now. She's still looking for dentures. I just want to help her as much as I can. The Minister of Health is helping me with this, so I hope that we can get her dentures. She cries in front of me and all she says is: All I want to do is eat an apple. A simple, simple request. We're trying to make this province a lot healthier; that lady is not going to get very healthy without a set of teeth so she can eat an apple or a peach or a pear. These are the fundamental things that she's after. It seems so fundamental. I hope that we can go in a direction that can help her out, because she means a lot to me as well.

I have another lady in my area. She needs both knee replacements done. She's being told that she can't get the knee replacements done until she loses weight, and she can't lose weight, of course, because she can't stand. It's just a revolving door. It's incumbent on all of us to reach out and take all these issues on, on a personal note, so we can do the best we can. I realize our fiscal, financial situation is in dire straits; there's no doubt about it. I know everybody is working real hard to do whatever they can.

It brings me on to mental health, of course. Our PMR is gone in for Wednesday, and it's going to be about mental health. I'm looking forward to speaking on that as well. I said it before and I think I say it every time I speak, but the mental health crisis is 10-times worse than the COVID crisis here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The anxieties that are going to come out with people that have to go back to work or looking to go back to work or opening up now, as we open to the rest of the country. It's great; don't get me wrong. I'm looking forward to the plan. It's the right plan, in my opinion, but there are going to be lots of concerns and anxieties out there with people coming home or people coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. We still don't vaccinate children under the age of 12.

I just want to encourage everybody throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, as the reopening plan happens, let's not throw everything just out the window. It can't happen like that. We need to ensure that physical distancing can still take place in certain areas, if it can, and masks. We need to ensure that we still stay smart about this so we don't go backwards in time and any more clusters and whatnot. Because that would be absolutely horrible to open up and have some sort of clusters where we have to shut down again in August. The light is at the end of the tunnel. I'm happy and I know everybody else is happy as well.

Mental health illness: It knows no age. Children, to me, nowadays the mental health crisis is more predominant in children than it ever has been before. I don't know if it's just we're more aware of it, but children in school nowadays, they don't have it easy. They don't have it easy at all, especially now with our social medias and stuff, the bullying, with COVID and with the

plans to keep them home to keep them safe, and to get them back to school. A lot of kids suffered over this past year, they truly did.

Just to be thrown out of your routine sometimes. I know kids that have started out with a 90-some-odd average and now might be down into the 80s or 70s, and this affects them quite a bit. I mean, in the big scheme of things, no, it probably won't, but their esteem, how they feel, it's important to them. A lot of kids felt it hard to get a handle on trying to learn with the proposed evaluations that we had when it comes to keeping them in school, keeping them home. So we need to keep an eye on the children as we move forward. I encourage all parents in Newfoundland and Labrador to talk to your children, start that conversation, ask them how they are today and sit down with them. You'd be surprised what you would find out.

I know that my door is always open to any school-aged children. If you feel like you can't talk to your parents or you don't have any parents or you're left to your own device, stop by my office in Grand Falls-Windsor any time because we talk to a lot of young people there and try to keep their spirits up and give them whatever they need to move forward.

Poverty also goes along with this, too, this monster that I talked about that we all have to fight against. The poverty that a lot of people face in Newfoundland and Labrador is unreal. Again, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands just talked about the power rates for electricity, to keep the heat on. How many people go to bed cold? There are tons of people that go to bed cold. There are tons of people that go to bed hungry. Even though you might be eating - we talked about nutrition - for the most part, society, we're starving ourselves. A lot of people out there are starving themselves eating the food that does not have the nutritional essence that they need to keep them healthy, moving along and get them by day to day, and the kids do it, too.

Poverty is huge, it's here in Newfoundland and Labrador; we're not exempt from it by no means. It's urban; it's rural. It's everywhere. It's in the Big Land; it's on the Island here. It's incumbent on us, of course, to try to get the best we can for our constituents so they aren't

suffering, so they aren't just surviving; they're living. Again, I encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to reach out to your neighbours, your relatives, the older folks down the street, ask them how they're doing. If I make a big meal, by God, I give it away, out in Grand Falls-Windsor. I can cook, trust me. I give a lot of my food away because I know a lot of people out there need it, and I know we all do as much as we can in here.

Throughout my district we have some issues: some easier issues and some harder issues. One of the easiest issues that we're trying to resolve out there - and I'm hoping to talk to the minister afterwards - has been ongoing for some time now, but the mill property in Grand Falls House. When Abitibi left, they took down the mill and there's a huge piece of property out there that Grand Falls-Windsor could avail of. What they want to do there is nothing big: They want to put in some greenery area, some scenic park area. It would be great to boost our tourism out there.

I know these talks have been happening for years and years now. We're trying to get around language and liability issues. I encourage the government to please continue these talks. Moving forward out of COVID, everybody is looking to get their tourism strategy in place, this would be huge to the Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans District and our tourism.

Grand Falls House is the same way. That is an icon. That place is quite old and it still has the furniture in there. I go visit it from time to time. What that could do for Grand Falls is huge. It could boost our tourism industry. The best thing about all this: It doesn't cost a thing. There's not a dollar being asked for with this. We're hoping to get this in order sooner than later. I encourage the government, please, talk to me about it. I look forward to talking to the minister about this as well.

One of the more exciting things - and as far as I know, the money is turned over for this now - is the Lionel Kelland Hospice. We've been hearing about it for quite some time now here in Newfoundland and Labrador. You don't realize the value of it until somebody in your family needs it, and it's needed, trust me. It's going to come with a cost, but there are also cost-saving initiatives, too: To give a person in hospice care

a bed in a hospital costs a lot more than giving them a bed inside this hospice. I look forward to the day that opens up so we can have our elderly folks or anybody die with dignity, with peace. Of course, it will be, God willing, for children as well.

It's something that's needed. We're the only province still not to have it. I think it's right there on our radar. I'm looking forward to it. I know the people of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador should celebrate this, because what they have planned out there, it's pretty phenomenal. I'm looking forward to volunteering at the Lionel Kelland Hospice when it finally opens.

Equalization: We talked about that, and of course we don't have the power here to change the equalization formula, but by God, we can definitely push for it in Ottawa. We can make our case. I know the government is doing it and we're doing it. I'm hoping the MPs are doing it when the time comes. I'm not sure when the equalization process is going to come up again for –

S. COADY: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: When?

S. COADY: 2024.

C. TIBBS: Oh, excellent, okay, 2024.

It's still a couple of years away but it would be great to see something before that. It's just when you look at it from a citizen standpoint of Quebec getting their \$13 billion, and still putting up surpluses in their budgets. Of course, we're not doing that. We could definitely avail – the word itself: equalization. It's to make each province, give it an equal footing when it comes to their economy and providing goods and services for the people of the province.

I look forward to that when the day comes; 2024 does come pretty quick, but we need to make sure that we advocate for that as much as we can.

Green energy here in Newfoundland and Labrador: We've always said that we're the

green battery that powers a lot of Canada. When you look at Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a sporadic population, but we have tons of trees, we have tons of greenery. We have the cleanest oil – some of the cleanest oil – on the planet. We have two huge hydroelectric projects.

It's beyond me how the federal government aren't doing more for Newfoundland and Labrador. That's just my opinion. They're looking to get greener, they're looking to have less pollution in the air. By God, nobody's done any more – in my opinion – than Newfoundland and Labrador. I think that we should be able to reap some benefits of that.

You talk about the goods and services in Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, I'm learning as I go here, but I just can't believe that we're paying the same amount for codfish, for instance. In the stores they (inaudible) away. Shouldn't we be reaping some of that benefit, more than we are now?

Timber is the same way. I know that there are different commodities and world markets and stuff like that, but we're shipping a lot of our timber out here. Don't we deserve a break on some of those timber costs if we want to build something? It's in our backyard. I know it's not as simple as that, but I'm sure it can be at some point. I think we deserve a break on that. If we want to go buy two-by-four, we shouldn't have to pay the same price that somebody would pay in a big city where they don't have any lumber. It's right here in our backyard. I know that we also want to make sure that we take care of our natural resources.

Marathon Gold up in Buchans, Valentine Lake: It's a huge project. We're looking at over 400 jobs. Marathon Gold have already been extremely good to the communities up there. They have passed on a lot of money, helped with a lot of initiatives. We couldn't be happier to have Marathon Gold in our backyard, in my backyard.

For all those that put the work in on that, thank you so much. We're looking at about a 13-year mine life with some very high-paying jobs. That's exactly what we need in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our mining sector is great; it's

huge. We need more of that. I look forward to that as well.

Just leaving off here – I have 30 seconds left – the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talked about Newfoundland Power. I'm just going to say they could have put a zero on that. I know they have to put something forward every three years; they could have put a zero on it. Again, it does come down to greed. Right now, our citizens can't afford to pay it and I'll stand up for them as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to congratulate my colleague behind me for his passion. Every time he speaks, you can hear the passion in his voice. I think that the people of Grand Falls-Windsor are well served by having a Member like him.

I'd also like to acknowledge something that my colleague from Bonavista also mentioned about the House of Assembly and the number of people who actually tune in to watch it. When they're tuning in, I don't know some days if they're watching a comedy or if they're watching a soap opera. Sometimes I wonder myself about the thing.

But you know what's interesting – and someone said the name for your soap opera should be as the stomach turns, as opposed to *As the World Turns*. Some days I tend to agree. Then there's the thing about a soap opera. Those that watch them, the people who watch *Coronation Street* and others, I'm sure they'll tell you that you can miss an episode or two and still keep up and still know what's going on.

Well, in some ways the House of Assembly is like that, because starting in 2019, I was talking about the road in Cold Brook, in 2020 I talked about the road in Cold Brook and in 2021 I'm still talking about the road in Cold Brook. So if anybody has missed an episode or so, I just want to let you know that I am still looking to see if

we can get some paving done in Cold Brook. I'm looking forward to the Minister of Transportation – the third edition – to see if we can get something done in Cold Brook.

Today, I don't want to talk about the budget and the billions of dollars in the budget; I want to talk about the individual people in our districts who are suffering and who are perhaps not being looked after as much as we would like. I want to tell you about a gentleman who in June was told that he needed cardiac surgery and he wasn't a candidate for stents. He has three blockages at 90 per cent, two at 70 per cent and one at 50 per cent. You might say, well, he was told in June, but I need to tell you, he was told in June of 2020. This is June of 2021 and that gentleman is still sitting at home waiting for a call to have cardiac surgery – one year later. He said to me: Do I have to have a heart attack in order to get into the hospital to get my surgery? When we talk about the budget and all of those things, it's people like him – and you have them in your districts; it's not unique to Stephenville - Port au Port. This is the type of service that we have to find a way to make improvements on.

Ophthalmology: How many of you have people in your district, seniors in your district, who have been waiting more than two years to get eye surgery? Who have lost their independence, not because they're not physically well, but because they can no longer see to drive their vehicles anymore? Again, this is not unique to Stephenville - Port au Port; I think it's unique to every single district. It needs to be adjusted. It needs to be fixed.

Colonoscopies: People who have waited over a year to have a colonoscopy, with a history of family disease – not good enough; we have to do better. Radiology services: Similar issues; waiting for CAT scans or MRIs. At the same time, we can sit here in the House and talk about billions and billions of dollars that we're spending but, at the end of the day, it's really what services do we provide and on what timely basis.

My colleagues also referred to the lady who was waiting to be able to get her teeth repaired or get a new set of teeth. We talk about wanting to eat healthy, but it's pretty bad when someone can't even afford to eat – or not only not afford to eat;

can't eat – because they have to wait for dentures. These are issues that are, again, not unique to my District of Stephenville - Port au Port. They exist in my District of Stephenville - Port au Port, just as I'm sure they exist in yours. It's something that we have to start focusing on.

I noticed in the budget that there were additional monies for the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. I'm looking forward to the rollout and getting the details of what that means, because as an MHA, I spend an incredible amount of time trying to help people navigate through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. It seems that a good program with all good intentions is mired in rules and regulations and access.

We know health reform is being talked about. Unfortunately, when they talk about health reform, it's usually not about what you're going to do in the bigger cities; it's about what you're going to do in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Many people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador – we understand that not every service can be available in our communities, but we expect that if we need to travel, then we shouldn't have to worry about how we're going to get there or whether or not we can afford to go.

I've had people in my office who didn't have \$40 to take the bus to go to a medical appointment. It's 2021 and they have no way to get to their medical appointment. I think we owe it to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that whether you live five miles or 500 miles from the tertiary care centre, the last thing you need to worry about is how you're going to get there or whether you can afford to go. I look forward to the changes being made in the Medical Transportation Assistance Program that will help more people along the way.

We've all heard the statistics about family physicians. The minister stands up and says: We have more family physicians in our province than we've ever had before. He's not wrong, but the question becomes where are they? They're not in my district, when I talk to people who have had eight different family physicians over 10 years and the shortages that currently exist in my district. They're not in my colleague's district out in Conception Bay South; he's raised

a petition about it. I'm not sure, for the rest of you that live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, if you all have the same issues.

We need to find out where they are, and then we also need to find out how we can do a different kind of distribution. Maybe it's not family physicians; maybe it's the primary care model. Maybe it's the use of nurse practitioners and giving them more flexibility so they can provide those types of services. Clearly, there needs to be a review done.

The Greene report made reference to a review of MUN medical school – I'm all for it – and it talks about a review of their administrative expenses. I think we need to go further. I think we need to go and look at exactly what our needs are. Some time ago governments in the past have expanded the med school, significantly, with a lot more seats available. But I'm not sure that in rural Newfoundland and Labrador we're necessarily seeing the influence and I'm sure there are lots of reasons for that.

In my particular case, out in Stephenville - Port au Port, it's not only an issue of recruitment, it's an issue of retention. It's almost like there's a revolving door. They come in one, take a look around and go out the other. That has got to stop. We have to find a way to get a lot more consistency. We know people will come, change and people will move, but we have to find a way to slow that revolving door down. We need to have those discussions.

I also deal with a lot of AES clients, just like I'm sure everybody else in this House does, who are on income support, and that's just what it is, it's support; it's meant to be support. Unfortunately, some people find themselves mired in a circle and they just can't seem to get out of it. Our programs aren't necessarily set up to help them get off income support. When someone comes in your office and tells you: I would love to get off income support, but I can't afford to. There's something wrong with that statement. I can't afford to give up my income support because if I go to work I'll be worse off.

We have a problem here and so we need to find a way to help wean them off. Maybe it's not the case right now where we simply collect dollar for dollar. If you work and make an income, if

you earn so many dollars then we're going to pull that back from your income support immediately. Maybe there's some kind of bridging program that we need to think about. How do we make it better? How do we get more people back into the workforce without simply cutting them off completely? Again, it's something that I think is possible and I think it's something we should seriously look at.

There's a lot of discussion in the Greene report about physical assets, about buildings and whether we sell them or not, and procurement. When we talk about investing our money in infrastructure, who does the cost-benefit analysis on what we should do, whether we should replace a building, repair a building or simple lease to someone in the community?

There are a couple of examples out my way. We have a courthouse that is wheelchair inaccessible. If you have challenges with mobility or are in a wheelchair, you can't be seen in the courthouse. They rent a room at the local hotel and hold court there. At the same time as I'm saying this there's apparently a tender gone out to spend \$800,000 or \$900,000 on putting a new roof on a building that's 40 years old, or more, and that's not wheelchair accessible. How is that value for money?

This building also probably burns 70,000 litres of fuel a year, or the bill is around \$70,000. We're trying to get away from oil and we talk about transferring government assets to electricity. Again, another classic example. Maybe there was a cost-benefit analysis done; I don't know. I have to think there are entrepreneurs out there who would gladly lease us a building, lease government a building and that would be more economical, at the end of the day, to maintain than a building that's that old.

Recently, despite the wishes and the recommendation of Western Health to have a family care, primary care building built on the site of the hospital, government decided: No, we're going to renovate the old Bay St. George Medical Clinic. Again, a building left over from the days of the air force at Stephenville; a building that we just spent close to a million dollars making it look good on the outside but still haven't done anything with the air quality issues on the inside; and a building where we're

getting ready to spend another million dollars on to renovate the second floor.

At the same time when Western Health are talking about a primary care model, where they currently have people located in three separate buildings in Stephenville and they would like to move them under one roof and they would like to do it on the hospital ground. Was there a cost-benefit analysis done on that? I don't think so. So we spent \$2 million on a 60-year-old building that is still burning fuel and that could have been converted, I guess, to electricity, or maybe there was another option.

I'd like to think that at some point in time we start looking at other options than simply renovating old buildings and spending millions of dollars that we don't have – apparently – on old buildings and start looking to see what the options might be. Some may say: Oh, your options are to try to shut it all down. I don't agree with that either; I don't think that's the way.

I know that there are buildings, like the Stephenville hospital, for example – a state-of-the-art hospital – that could be doing a lot more. It's not about recruiting all kinds of specialties and being a tertiary care centre. No, not at all. It's about using what the facility has. Day surgeries, there are a lot more day surgeries that could be performed there so that people from Stephenville - Port au Port and farther out – and the hon. Member for St. George's - Humber District – don't have to travel all the way into Corner Brook for day surgery. Surely, there are some benefits to be had by allowing a facility to use what it has and perform those surgeries. I think those are things that certainly can be looked at, that need to be looked at. It's just a different way of spending our money.

We've talked about government services. There's a lot in the report about government services, as well, and how we streamline that. The phrase "red tape" is something that's overused, but at the end of the day, we start off with a good intention and we will develop a policy. In order for that policy to be implemented, we need to set up somebody to manage it. When we set that up to manage it, then, okay, they have to refer to someone else. The next thing you know, we're creating a little

empire and we're building, we're building, we're building and we're building, to the point now where recently a gentleman in my office told me he had to go through 12 government departments to get one permit. I keep asking: How is that even possible?

In the Premier's Greene report, it talked about adding a 15 per cent increase to all of the fees we collect. In Estimates, when I spoke with the Minister of Finance, I said: Before you go down that road, maybe it's time to review those fees. Are we really making any money off of those fees? If we charge \$20, are we making \$5; are we making \$10; are we making \$1? Let's do that before we simply turn around, tack 15 per cent on and cost the people of the province more.

Why do we need to go through 12 government departments to get a permit? Those are the types of things that don't cost a lot to do, that kind of review, but I think it's imperative that we do it and we change for the better. If we're going to modernize government and streamline government and all those other buzzwords that we talk about, then let's put our money where our mouth is and actually find ways to do it.

Crown lands, again, I don't think it's unique to Stephenville - Port au Port or to this side of the House. I am sure that all of you in your districts have issues with Crown lands. I don't know why. I don't know what the problem is or what the challenges are, but I'll tell you a little story.

I had a gentleman in my office who had applied for a permit for a Crown land cabin. He had done this and Crown Lands had turned around and told him they had cabin lots for sale. Crown Lands and government said: Yup, these lots are for sale; you can purchase them for \$5,000. He went up and put up his \$5,000 to get his cabin. He went in to get a permit to put the cabin on the Crown land only to be told: Oh, no, no, no, no, you can't build a cabin on that Crown land unless you get an environmental assessment done. Another \$500. Now, why in the blankety-blank, if you're going to sell a piece of land and you're going to charge \$5,000 for it, would you already not have done the environmental work to make sure that you could actually sell the land? What in the hell is the good of buying a piece of land if you can never build on it because of

environmental issues? You're too close to a river.

This is not the fault of anybody. This is just the way our system is set up and why we need, when we talk about modernized government and changing it, to get on with it; we need to do it. Again, these are things that I think are easily done and that would certainly make a lot of difference to a lot of people in our province.

I've also talked recently with the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs about my two brooks. I have a Warm Brook and a Cold Brook and depending upon where the river flows down, that's how they got their names. Apparently, one has a source from way up in the mountains where the water is a lot colder and the other is more on the flat. I'll have more to say, of course, on my Cold Brook and I also have issues with Warm Brook. So I look forward to chatting with the minister about them. Not hard fixes, not a lot of money.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Blue Beach. Now, the former minister of Transportation last year provided a \$5,000 grant to Blue Beach. Blue Beach is at the end of a 10-kilometre dirt road; that's where the wharf is. There are over \$2 million worth of fish products landed at that wharf, but they don't just have to drive up the road; they have a 10-kilometre stretch. So the minister of Transportation last year provided them a grant and I look forward to getting that grant again this year so we can get the road graded.

For the last 30 seconds, I'll stop there and say thank you very much for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

I would just like to remind everyone that tonight at 6 p.m., the Government Services Committee will be meeting to discuss the Estimates of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Public Procurement.

This House does now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

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