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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!

**Statements by Members**

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Labrador West, Harbour Main, St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise and Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

I'm proud to recognize Mr. Michael Martin, Labrador's first home-born MHA. Mr. Martin represented the electoral District of Labrador South from 1972 to 1975 and is known for designing the Labrador flag in 1974.

This past week, Labrador celebrated the 48th anniversary of the Labrador flag officially being introduced here in the House of Assembly, actually. In 1973, Michael Martin, along with Members of the Labrador brotherhood club, designed the flag that fully represents Labrador.

Mike and his wife made 64 flags and sent them to 59 communities in Labrador and one each for the three Labrador Members of the House of Assembly on March 31, 1974.

The Labrador flag has been celebrated ever since March 31. Labrador Flag Day is the day that we, as Labradorians, celebrate our uniqueness in the Big Land and the different people and cultures that call that place home.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Mr. Martin and everyone involved in creating and designing the Labrador flag 48 years ago. It will remain a statement of identity for all Labradorians for years to come.

With leave, I want to mention that Mr. Martin is currently ill and I ask the House also to send him some good wishes as well.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I am honoured to stand here today to speak of a 17-year-old young woman from Upper Gullies in the District of Harbour Main. Ms. Lauren Rowe has demonstrated excellence as an elite soccer player in this province and across Canada.

Often described as having generational talent as an athlete, Lauren, in her young life, has achieved many prestigious and honourable recognitions such as: the Newfoundland Soccer Association Player of the Year for 2018, 2019 and 2021; Lauren played with the Jubilee Cup league, the top senior women's league in Newfoundland and Labrador, leading the league in goal scoring; as team captain she led her school, Queen Elizabeth Regional High, to its first provincial soccer championship in 23 years. She's been named as MVP, Rookie of the Year and the Golden Boot, to name a few titles.

Lauren has been chosen as a training player for Canada's national under 20 women's soccer team, vying to qualify for the coveted World Cup in Costa Rica this August.

I ask all Members to join me in recognizing Lauren Rowe for her extraordinary achievements in soccer. This young woman is a star athlete for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to watch and be proud of.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Jimmy Carter said "Whether the borders that divide us are picket fences or national boundaries, we are all neighbours in a global community."

While the war in Ukraine has shaken the world, Grade 2 student Georgiy Dragan and the

Lakecrest Independent School community demonstrate the importance of being good global neighbours and citizens.

Recently, Georgiy Dragan and his parents, Adilya and Fedor, who are from Ukraine, organized a medical supplies drive to collect donations for friends and family back home. Thanks to this, over 3,000 pounds of goods were shipped to the Ukraine through the Red Cross. While the majority of donations were much needed medical supplies, the school also sent clothing, school supplies and other non-perishables. Students, families, teachers, and staff organized fundraisers, decorated the school's windows in blue and yellow and put up displays throughout the building.

Principal Patrick Boekhoud believes that, as an international school, Lakecrest has a duty to be a good global neighbour. The Dragan family is extremely proud of the school community's support in helping their friends, family and others still in Ukraine.

I ask Members to join me in honouring the Dragan family and the Lakecrest school community for helping their neighbours in Ukraine.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**P. DINN:** Speaker, today I pay tribute to a well-known Paradise soccer coach, volunteer and friend to many who passed away as a result of a tragic accident just eight days ago.

Brad Kerrivan was a devoted and loving father to his son, Colton, and family was always his top priority. It was common to see Brad at the rink or soccer field with Colton, and he would play his guitar for Colton at night as he fell asleep.

Brad will be remembered as that guy with the big smile on his face, so easy to deal with and one who made everyone around him better. He loved a good party and was nicknamed "Chili Man" because he always brought a big pot of

chili to gatherings. Whatever he took on, he did so with passion and energy to see it through, volunteering and participating in many activities in Paradise and throughout the community.

Brad was 42 years old. Someone once told me life is not measured in the number of years but in how you live those years. Brad made the most of his years.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Dwan, Colton, Barbara, Alice, Jenine, Joey and Leala and his family.

Although the song is ended, the melody lives on.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I stand to recognize a family man, exceptional physician, community leader and dedicated volunteer from my district. I speak of the late Dr. Walter Tucker. Walter spent over four decades caring for the residents of Bell Island, while becoming a community leader with a number of organizations and served as the community's mayor.

Whether inside the clinic or at a town event, he served his beloved community in every way. The residents of Bell Island treasured their long-term doctor who did it all from delivering babies, making house calls and treating everything from colds to complicated illnesses, but, most of all, he was there to simply lend a confident and comforting ear. Walter in his quiet way was happiest when he was helping people.

It was widely said that Walter didn't deliver Bell Island babies; he gently charmed infants into the world with his infectious smile and relaxed, engaging personality.

Even after leaving Bell Island to live next to the Clovelly golf course to take up his second passion of playing golf, Walter continued to travel to Bell Island daily to ensure residents of the island received quality health care.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in passing on our condolences to his wife Marian and family.

Rest in peace, my friend.

**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:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador's annual award winners.

These awards recognize the outstanding tourism leaders and businesses that make valuable contributions to the province's tourism industry.

Sullivan's Songhouse received the Cultural Tourism Award and Kathi Stacey received the Tourism Achievement Award. Both of these awards are sponsored by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

Located on the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula, Sullivan's Songhouse welcomes people in a traditional biscuit-box house, twice a week, to celebrate the rich tradition of storytelling and song. Just like a traditional kitchen party, host Sean Sullivan, accompanied by friends and fellow musicians, encourages visitors to participate and give a song, if they are so inclined.

Positioning Eastern Newfoundland as a leader in sustainable tourism and a premier destination for travellers, Kathi Stacey created a sense of local pride with her My Town television program. She is responsible for the Legendary Coasts of Eastern Newfoundland partnership with St. Pierre et Miquelon, a new and never-before-seen partnership that has been an amazing success for both the French islands and Eastern Newfoundland.

Other notable recipients this year's awards include Kilmory Resort, Grates Cove Studios,

Perchance Theatre, Rugged Edge, E.C. Boone Limited, George House Heritage Bed and Breakfast, Fishing for Success, and Ann Simmons.

Please join me in congratulating them on their remarkable achievements. They are all shining examples of the quality of our tourism operations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We, too, in the Official Opposition would like to congratulate Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador award winners, who have dedicated themselves to ensuring our tourism industry continues to flourish in these challenging economic times.

These last three years have provided many obstacles for these businesses and tourism leaders to overcome. To all the award winners – Sullivan's Songhouse, Kathi Stacey, Kilmory Resort, Grates Cove Studios, Perchance Theatre, Rugged Edge, E.C. Boone Limited, George House Heritage Bed and Breakfast, Fishing for Success, and Ann Simmons – we salute you all for your fortitude and belief in this great province we call home. We wish you continued success as you all push the bar higher and higher in our tourism operation.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We share in the excitement of the tourism industry, as they get ready for the upcoming 2022 season. We encourage the government to

introduce supports to help them and their staff by implementing paid sick days so that those with increased exposure to COVID, due to the tourism industry, have stability and they can help contain the spread by staying home when they are sick and they can still make their bills.

Thank you.

**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, Speaker.

The federal Liberals failed to increase the amount of money given to the provinces for health care spending in the budget. The federal Liberals promised increases in health transfers, specifically mental health, and the Premier failed to secure an agreement for this year's budget.

Is the Premier disappointed in his federal friends?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak about the CHT.

What I will say we did do, in terms of an agreement for Newfoundland and Labrador, was Bay du Nord.

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** So I think there is no question that we are incredibly interested in continuing discussions with the federal government on the CHT. It is something that the premiers meet about regularly. I, of course, have a strong voice at the premiers' table with respect to health care. We know the importance of mental health. I think the CMHT is an incredible opportunity to guide mental health well into the future, beyond any governments, by assuming it has a transfer payment, Mr. Speaker.

Rest assured, we will continue to fight on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and, indeed, all Canadians to ensure that the federal government continues to increase the CHT, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

We commend the Premier and all Members of this House of Assembly for diligently lobbying to ensure that the Bay du Nord Project went forward. It is great for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – needed. And it is our future and it should have been approved much earlier than it was but that doesn't help the need for our health care on the Connaigre Peninsula, Central Newfoundland or anywhere else in Newfoundland and Labrador. That has to be a partnership with the federal government; they need to step up to the plate on this case.

Canadian premiers have expressed their disappointment. Despite the efforts of hard-working health care professionals, health care in the province is broken. There is no other way to describe it. The Health Accord called for additional health care investments by the federal government.

Will you follow the advice of the Health Accord and increase health care investments or will you follow the advice from Moya Greene and slash health care by 25 per cent?

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

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

Again, we have said many times on this side of the House that we're not interested in slashing health care. We're interested in reinventing, reimagining health care to ensure that it is delivering the services that people need. I know the system is broken; I worked in the system. I understand how complex it is and how stressed and strained the people and the patients, frankly, are within that system.

But what we have been doing to date is not working. Continuing to invest in an old paradigm and old systems that aren't driving the quality assurance, the quality results that we need, is frankly reverting to the mean. It may be easy politics to continue to argue for that, but that's not what we're about. We're about reinventing and reimagining a health care system that is the future for people in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting that we talk about reimagining. That doesn't help the 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who don't have a health care professional to go to tomorrow when they have an ailment.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Additional investments are needed for the Health Accord, and the document is clear. Additional money is also needed to improve wait times, give nurses and doctors some relief, and to finally make sure everyone has a family doctor.

I ask the Premier: After seven years in government, the health care system continues to suffer; will you admit your minister has not done his job?

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

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

While it feels like seven years, it's only been a few years for me.

We're ensuring that we're advancing that CHT. The Member opposite is quite correct. A large proportion of this financial responsibility lies with the federal government, which is why we're at the table continuing to discuss with the prime minister and with other ministers to ensure that they understand the importance of the CHT for patients, Mr. Speaker.

We are continuing to invest. In fact, over the last couple of years, we have increased the expenditure in health care by \$400 million, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to make sure we invest, but we're not going to invest in old paradigms. We want to make sure that we are investing smartly, prudently to drive the outcomes that people need in this province, not the continued spending as has been in the past, which produces poor results, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

With 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without a family physician, closures of emergency rooms, overworked doctors, nurses, paramedics and all other health professionals here, and an exodus of health professionals in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, it's time. Premier, you're the manager of your team. It's time you looked at the coach and made some changes here to improve health care for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, extraordinary situations need extraordinary measures. Our seniors, our families, our students for several months there have been skyrocketing fuel costs, food at record levels and your answer is change is in the air.

I ask the Premier: Why didn't you spare some change and put it in the people's pockets?

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

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

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

I believe that when the Minister of Finance presented the budget she articulated just that. Just prior to the budget, Mr. Speaker, and during budget, this government has looked to put money back into the pockets of people in this province. Every province – globally, in fact, people are facing tough times because of supply

shortages, because of fuel prices. But we've eliminated the sales tax on insurance. We've reduced the cost of registering a vehicle to 50 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the early learning and child care \$42-million investment by government is saving families thousands of dollars every year; free Metrobus passes for people on income support, seniors and youth in care.

The list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Any of those issues that have been outlined there do very little to keep people warm in their homes, put food on their table and ensure that they're going to have a quality of life in the near future.

Speaker, the Liberal government told the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we have weathered the storm and the fog is lifting. Well, Minister, people on the Connaigre Peninsula, the Northern Peninsula and every other corner of this province are calling MHAs begging for help with food prices, fuel costs and to help their community secure a family doctor.

I ask the Premier: Does it sound like the storm has lifted to you?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, this government is working hard to help businesses in the province keep people employed. We are working hard to expand the economy. We are working hard to pay down the deficit.

One of the things we did was the increase in the Income Supplement, a \$7-million investment by government; an increase in the Seniors' Benefit, almost a \$7-million investment by government. That puts money in the pockets of people. We did an increase for those on income support, a \$5-million investment by government.

Everybody in this country, everybody globally is feeling the pinch, Mr. Speaker, but we are stepping up to the plate and putting money where it counts, back into the pockets of people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

Again, lots of words around reimagining and all I could think of is imagine the people who have no family physician, because they're real, they're experiencing that now. Imagine the people who have to actually pay to see a health care provider in this province. Imagine the people who have no relief at the pumps.

Last week, in an effort to cover up their failure to address the cost of living in the province, the minister released a graphic targeted at low-income earners. I've been contacted, as well as my colleagues, by many people who are insulted at this graphic, noting that the numbers contained in the graphic just do not represent reality.

I ask the minister: Will you apologize to the people of the province?

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

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

There are various scenarios, Speaker, on family compositions and on family income compositions as well. One of the things that was tried here was a snapshot on how *Budget 2022* helps those in this province in need. We've put over \$142 million back into the pockets of people in this province.

The graphic was an indication or a snapshot of how government is trying to assist people within the province, Mr. Speaker. We certainly won't apologize for trying to help people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, to cite an example of just how out of touch this government is with those struggling in poverty, this graphic assumed low-income parents would have money enough to spend on physical activity – \$1,000 a year. That’s what this graphic outlined.

One day after the budget was released the minister herself said she was, quote, investigating the numbers.

So I ask the minister: Was she misinformed or was she misinforming?

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

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

You know, that’s very unfortunate to hear the Member opposite say those types of words. This government, as I’ve said, has worked hard to keep money into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the Member opposite: The Metrobus passes that we’re providing to those on income support, to the seniors on the Guaranteed Income Supplement and youth –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. OSBORNE:** – in the province, Mr. Speaker, who are in care, is that something that he would take away? The \$37.8 million on vehicle insurance, which is money that goes directly back into the pockets of people in this province, Mr. Speaker, is that something that he’d take away? The one-time benefit for income support, would he take that away?

I am asking the Member: What would you have done?

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I am only going to be too happy, when we sit on that side of the

House, to tell them exactly how we will do things, as a minister.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, the only change in the air is spare change.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** Love is in the air. COVID is in the air. But the only thing for the people, when it comes to relief about their fuel tanks and the high cost of fuel, that’s blowing in the wind.

I ask the minister: How will this budget help people fill their fuel tanks?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we all saw what that party sitting on that side of the House did. It’s part of the reason I left that party, Mr. Speaker, because they put this province in a mess. They put this province in a mess. You look at the one project, Muskrat Fall, Mr. Speaker, and the investment by this government and the federal government to ensure that electricity rates wouldn’t double. No, we don’t want you guys in government again.

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

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

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

Now I’ve got that tune, the answers are blowing in the wind, in my head.

Speaker, information is key to improve health care, including involving front-line stakeholders and those with lived experience. That’s critical. Our province is receiving more than \$27 million in federal funding as a result of Bill C-17.

What is government doing to ensure the best use of these additional health care dollars?



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

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

I would certainly concur with the Member's preamble about lived experience and front-line workers. The Premier and myself participated in a think tank last week with the Registered Nurses' Union and found it extremely informative.

Our proposals around that money are under development. In the meantime, our focus is on ensuring that people in hallways on stretchers, get beds; that nurses get relief from the pressure that they have been under; they get some holidays and some vacation; and that we refocus our energies to deal with the acute situation with regard to those people who are acutely ill at the moment.

That, and in the background, lurks COVID.

Thank you.

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

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

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

After many months of talking about a crisis and people in hallways, I'm glad you're starting to realize it.

When it comes to the federal funding programs, there is an unfair distribution of funds. Newfoundland and Labrador has the oldest population, the highest instance of chronic illness, a lower life expectancy, declining population and geographic challenges.

Health care transfers based on per capita formulas is the least beneficial to Newfoundland and Labrador. What discussion has the Premier had with the prime minister to address, not just an increase in these funds but a more equitable formula?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you for the question.

It's a good one and it's one that I've raised with the prime minister. The per capita formula actually helps Alberta differentially and is punishing Newfoundland and Labrador.

If you look at the cost of when people actually consume health care in their lives, of course, it's the older population. So the per capita formula doesn't work in my opinion.

That will be the choice of the prime minister in a discussion point at the table, but I can certainly guarantee you that I share your view, Sir, and I've made it loud and clear at the federal table.

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

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

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

It's great to hear the Premier mention the seniors.

The Official Opposition here has been receiving a flurry of calls from people who can't access a family doctor in this province. One particular group, seniors, are being forced to give up their driving because they can't get the medical that is required for them at age 75 to 80 and every two years after.

I ask the Premier: What does he say to healthy seniors that are now forced to give up their driving because they don't have access to a family doctor?

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

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

Access to primary care providers, including nurse practitioners who can also deal with the driver's medical issue, is top of our mind. We realized that additional resources would be needed and last year we invested \$30 million, prior to the budget, in a targeted recruitment strategy and that is evolving. We are in the processes of hiring an assistant deputy minister.

We have rebooted our marketing campaign to take things on the national stage.

The programs announced under that have started to attract new physicians, and I noticed one has arrived in Green Bay within the last week or so. These challenges continue and we will continue to work through them. There's another \$14 million in this budget to help deal with that as well.

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

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

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

The money the minister spoke to, some of that's going towards these collaborative care units. I heard a story earlier today of individuals who could not access the Collaborative Team Clinic at Mundy Pond this past Saturday.

Minister, you've continued to say these team-based clinics will improve access to primary care, yet people are having trouble seeing a doctor.

I ask the minister: Why are these collaborative teams not working?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Mr. Speaker, I would take issue with the assumption in that statement. The Collaborative Team Clinics in St. John's have been extremely well received. At least 9,000 people have registered and now have primary care from the teams that we established in metro.

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

**J. HAGGIE:** There are more teams to come. There are teams to be set up in Central and Western and we allocated \$2 million each for collaborative teams in those areas. Labrador-Grenfell is working on those. Patient Connect NL will open up to allow registration for Central, for Western before the end of spring, Mr. Speaker. We are making progress and we continue to invest in primary care.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, there are obvious serious problems with access to primary care, and we're hearing it from individuals like in the clinic at Mundy Pond.

Speaker, the most recent violence prevention plan concluded in 2019. While initiatives like the Domestic Violence Help Line are helpful, a comprehensive plan is needed, which includes education and prevention efforts, supports for victims of violence, enforcement activities and healing supports.

I ask the minister: When will a new long-term violence prevention plan be released?

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

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

Again, I thank my hon. colleague for always raising these issues. They are indeed very important, and I appreciate every bit of attention that they get.

I'm happy to say that there were absolutely no cuts or decreases to the budget for the Office of Women and Gender Equality. I also want to thank community for their part in what they do at Women Centres, violence prevention, equality seeking. And \$3.2 million of the budget, of course, goes to helping community and violence prevention initiatives, not to mention all the legislative changes that we've seen here since 2015 in this House of Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, that answer ignored my question. Again, I need to understand: When will a new long-term

violence prevention plan be released? Not only have they failed to release this violence prevention plan that is fulsome, advocates are still waiting on the evaluation of the former violence prevention plan.

So, Minister: Can you please table the follow-up and evaluation report, which was completed on this important initiative?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker, and I, again, thank my hon. colleague.

A new initiative that we've introduced, actually, the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity, we've had two meetings to date and I'm happy to say that the funding to support those meetings will continue. As a matter of fact, we just talked about this in my department just earlier today. We're hoping to launch the third one this fall. That brings experts, people with lived experience, communities from across Newfoundland and Labrador to come and talk about these very important initiatives across the board.

So again, the conversation continues with community, across government there are a number of initiatives. I also open the door; the hon. Member is certainly welcome to come over and have a meeting with me and to join in with this work at any time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** What we need is full comprehensive plan. Is there a new plan? Where is it? We need to understand why this plan has not been evaluated and we have no idea if there's a new plan. And the lack of a violence prevention plan is resulting in the decline of preventative and responsive programs available.

So I ask the minister: Will you commit to holding effective and meaningful consultations

with advocates and organizations so that a plan can truly help reduce domestic violence in our province?

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

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

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

Again, I applaud the Member for continuing to keep these issues, of course, at the forefront. Again, a very successful round table, the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity, is doing exactly that, bringing communities together in one room from one side of this province to the other, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, \$3.2 million in violence prevention. We're always open to doing everything that we can to improve, not to mention the valuable programs and initiatives that are found across government in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, as well as Children, Seniors and Social Development, and of course the Office of Women and Gender Equality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Speaker, as the procurement process for the new penitentiary moves forward, every company except one has pulled out of the process, privately citing an unfair playing field that favours one company with close Liberal ties. No point in bidding, I was told.

What protection is the government going to offer taxpayers if it is turning another blank cheque to their Liberal friends?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I know the Member is quite obsessed when it comes to Liberal supporters and all that stuff, but the real issue here is a new correctional facility that is badly needed. I'm not going to take the advice of the Member opposite to delay it for another three years, because it is badly needed and that would be unfair to the inmates, families and the workers.

We, as a government, yes, we understand there is one proponent, we have confidence in that proponent and we'll be doing our due diligence when it comes to achieving that project moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I remind the minister, one thing I am obsessed with is how we spend our public monies.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, blank cheque.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

I have been here long enough to know when you hit a nerve that the chirping starts, so obviously I am on a nerve.

Speaker, blank cheque, cost plus, send us a bill when you're done, are words every contractor loves to here. Why does one company that donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Premier's leadership campaign and the Liberal Party have the inside track?

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

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

I will tell you one thing I'm not going to do is take advice from him on how to spend money.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Mr. Speaker, I'll still go to the importance of this issue and that is a new HMP which is badly needed for the inmates, the families and the workers. We will do due diligence on this file and we look forward to cutting the ribbon eventually on that building that is badly needed in this province.

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

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

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

I think the minister should realize he is Minister to the Crown for everyone in this province in that department. The monies he spends are important to every one of us, including me.

Thank you very much.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, I remind the minister the new mental health and addictions centre is being constructed for \$39 million more than the next lowest bid and will take a year longer to build.

Given the mess in Central Newfoundland with long-term care facilities, why is the minister forging ahead with another process that will only reward Liberal friends?

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

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

I'll stick to what's important here, Mr. Speaker, and that is the need for a new HMP for the inmates, for the families and for the workers. We're proud of that and we're going to do the due diligence on this file and, as I said before, we look forward to what this facility will hold and the services that it will provide to those inmates, families and workers.

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

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

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

Speaker, what they need to realize is it's a flawed process. It's a licence to print money, how's that? That's really what's going on here.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Move to the question, please.

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

Speaker, we still don't know who owns the mysterious numbered company –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

I must be still stepping on that nerve, I guess.

We still don't know who owns that mysterious numbered company that is the only (inaudible) that will make millions on the failed Canopy Growth deal.

Again, why does the minister believe taxpayers can get value for money when there's only one bidder and no transparency and no competition?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

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

In terms of numbered companies, a company can have as a name, a number or any other name. That information of shareholders is not collected by the province, which is comparable to most other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, as of April 1, changes to the *Corporations Act* came into force where we increased the disclosure requirements that companies have to keep a list of all their beneficial shareholders so that they can make it available to law enforcement.

There's no difference between having a number for a company or having a name for a company. It's the same as most provinces in Canada.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The staffing levels in our Nain clinic have been stretched beyond the breaking point. Nurses are struggling to get badly needed leave. They're burnt out. Now we're hearing that the Nain clinic will be losing two nursing positions.

Will the minister confirm this is not the case and commit to maintaining staffing levels all across Labrador until the Health Accord implementation program is released and debated in this House of Assembly?

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

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

Certainly, we have had challenges with staffing, and continue to work as hard as we can to support our front-line health care workers. I'm not aware of any staffing changes in the wind in Nain, or indeed in any of the other facilities across Labrador or the Island.

I can certainly look into it for the Member and will be happy to get back to her at an early opportunity.

Thank you.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, the president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has been very vocal about our health care in this province. I quote: "The NLMA is calling on the provincial government to

immediately implement a plan to rescue rural health care centres that are in crisis.”

But we see this budget cherry-pick pieces from the Health Accord to satisfy the cuts called for by Moya Greene, making decisions to save money without solving our health care crisis is adding to the stress of our health care workers who were already overworked before the pandemic.

I ask the minister: Will he present a plan for the re-imaging of health care so health care workers will know what their future will look like?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I would draw the Member opposite’s attention to our extremely good re-imagined plan called the Health Accord NL, the first volume of which is out in print. If the Member opposite would like a print copy I can find one for her, but they are widely available online. The second volume, the implementation plan, will be presented to myself and the Premier in due course. I don’t have a definite date yet.

We are taking those areas where we know we need to advance rapidly, that were common, and have discussed with Dr. Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth and moving those along without waiting for the report, knowing that that’s what’s going to come next.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development what new stock of affordable housing is being constructed or planning to be constructed and where? Are there plans to use the Grace General Hospital site to construct affordable housing units?

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

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

The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is certainly working on expanding the housing stock; we are working with the federal government to ensure that we meet the housing needs right across the province. We are also spending money on repairing our current rental housing units. We will be expanding shelters and we will also be expanding affordable housing in the province.

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

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

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

The budget made no commitments to increase the stock of available rental houses in this province. The CMHC sets the current vacancy rate in the province at 3.4 per cent. The average price across the province for a two bedroom is \$926 a month. In St. John’s, the rate is 3.1 per cent and the average rent is over \$1,000.

I ask the minister: What in the budget will address these realities that people are facing?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Again, Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

We’ve negotiated with the federal government a Canada Housing Benefit, which will increase rent supplements across the province. That’s in the budget. We will be expanding our maintenance and repairs on our housing units. That’s in the budget. We will also be expanding and increasing the housing stock. That’s in the budget.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** I'm not seeing it, Speaker, and shelters are not the answer.

Many housing units paid through rental supplements are sub-par and unliveable. I know because I've actually visited them. There should be clear enforceable standards that apply before CSSD agrees to pay rent for their clients in a given unit.

Will the minister bring in legislation – and when – that ensures that some level of enforceable property standards are met, especially, for landlords housing CSSD recipients?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Again, Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

So a couple of things. When it comes to clients of my department who are in housing units, whether owned and managed by Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation or a private landlord, we inspect those units to make sure they meet our standards. That's a given and that's a business practice that we are sure to continue.

When it comes to private shelters or not-for-profit shelters, if the Member is referring to that, we also have standards and we're building on those as well.

Thank you.

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

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

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

Pursuant to subsection 10(3) of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I am pleased to table this document regarding the establishment of Celebrate NL.

**SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, April 13, 2022, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and conduct Government Business.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much.

Speaker, I give notice, pursuant to Standing Order to 11(1), that this house shall not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

Speaker, the province's population has aged more rapidly than any other province in the country over the last 50 years.

The number of persons over aged 65 have more than doubled in the past 30 years.

Many aging couples have been assessed and deemed eligible for placement in a long-term care facility and require different levels of care and are separated into different facilities in order to get the care they require in a timely manner.

Having support and assistance as close to their home and community as possible should be a key objective in developing and providing services to our seniors. As well, individuals want choice in living in a place that maximizes independence.

Couples who have supported each other should not have to face being separated when they enter long-term care. Keeping them together ensures a better quality of life.

Therefore we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to enact legislation that allows couples to stay together even as they age, even at the highest level of care.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have to go too far, it was only a couple of weeks back that we experienced a couple in their 90s, married 73 years, who were separated. We managed to get them together for two days before the gentleman passed. But there are far too many instances of this that are happening out there.

The Minister of Health spoke to an earlier response today, although we're waiting on the implementation plan for the Health Accord, they're starting to work on things in advance. I will just read from the Health Accord. It talks about implementing a continuum of care for older adults, including older adults with disabilities. A continuum of care includes options for care that will follow a person through time, adapting to their changes. It goes on to say that we should be strengthening provincial legislation, regulation and policy to provide the care and protection for older people.

Strengthening provincial legislation, that's what this is about. This is actually asking for legislation. The minister has responded in the past saying it would be very difficult to legislate something we couldn't deliver. Well, it's time to step aside and have someone step in who can deliver. This is too serious.

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There have been many incidents of vehicles being damaged by potholes within the District of Bonavista, leading to frustration and added cost of living for residents and visitors. Many of these potholes remain unaddressed for lengthy periods of time after damage has occurred and notification of the damage was communicated to Transportation and Infrastructure.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to accept liability for these damages and/or repair these holes, alleviating the damage for drivers in a far more urgent manner.

Just to speak to the petition, Mr. Speaker. This seems to be a situation all over the Island, but I know that in the District of Bonavista, this winter in particular, it has led to many circumstances where we had vehicles damaged by potholes. Many of these potholes had been reported; I know I personally took pictures and notified them. Some of them probably as deep as eight to 10 inches below the asphalt, which would damage the rims, and we've had lots of damages.

I know that it is tough in an environment where we've got wide fluctuations of temperatures and I know there are challenges, but I think with a little more ingenuity we can come up with some measure to make sure that the roads are safer until we can get hot asphalt to fix it properly.

Larry Holloway in Musgravetown, who had experience with the highways, had notified me and stated: Even if the grey pickup trucks that cover every kilometre of our district daily – and I stand to be corrected on that – even if they had Class A in those chronic potholes to put in a few



shovelfuls, it would spare the residents and the visitors of having their vehicles damaged in the winter.

In conclusion, I realize the challenge, I realize cold patch is not going to always work at every given time, but the thought of putting Class A in those more chronic and more ominous potholes until the weather and the conditions improve to be able to fix it properly seems very legit.

The only thing I know is that we can't continue to have these potholes that would be unaddressed for months while vehicles are being constantly damaged.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I think it is only fair to get up and respond to it as I have seen a lot of pictures of the potholes, but I can table a letter that one Transportation minister was – and that's your leader there – that tells you exactly when you should fill a pothole.

The reality of it is, this year we have had weather patterns that have been the thaw and the freeze. It is beyond challenging out there. People are sending me pictures of potholes that are full of water; you can't repair it.

We're exploring different options. I ask people for feedback. If someone can tell me a good way or a more efficient way of doing it, we will do it. But it has been done over and over and over. With the challenge of the weather, it is just almost impossible to bring it to where we want it to be.

Hopefully, now when the spring hits we'll get better weather so the depots that have their summer maintenance plans, they can get at it quickly and create some sort of security for people that are travelling these highways. But, again, it's a challenge, it's a challenge for the TI workers, and I pat them on the back because they're doing a good job but with difficult circumstances.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This petition is for adequate health care for the community of Postville.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure the residents of the Northern Labrador community of Postville have adequate health care.

The community of Postville, Labrador, has only one Labrador-Grenfell Health nursing position in Postville at the single nursing clinic. This means that there is only one clinic nurse physically present in the community. This nurse does not have access to RCMP support services during a medical emergency because the community does not have RCMP stationed in their community.

The community of Postville is isolated with no road access to the outside world. The only means of year-round transportation is by aircraft. Often, inclement weather prevents air services, including medevac – that's medical evacuation services – from getting to Postville. Also, if the lone nurse becomes ill and inclement weather prevents nursing relief from reaching the community, Postville will be without a nurse.

Speaker, this petition is really important. Most people would say, well, just one nurse, what's the big deal, there's a lot of communities that don't have more than one nurse. But our communities are totally isolated. So at night, or if the weather is bad, that nurse is all alone, without professional services: no RCMP support, no additional health care supports. That's the biggest problem.

During a health care crisis – it could be any kind of crisis, actually, where there's medical attention needed and also the professional supports of the RCMP – it has actually contributed to a lot of stress, we're having trouble actually being able to keep nurses. Now, a lot of the times they're just on rotation and it's creating a lot of concerns. If we had road access, adjacent communities would be able to support the Postville clinic.

If a nurse is working all night and is very tired, she has to respond to an emergency the next day, or if that nurse gets sick or ill, basically, Postville will be without any nurse support.

So it's very, very important, Mr. Speaker, that we actually look at that and make sure the community of Postville is not vulnerable and at risk of not having any nurse support at any time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reasons for this petition are as follows:

The residents of South West Arm are troubled with the unsafe condition of the road and the lack of maintenance to the roads that are maintained by transportation and works.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to repair and maintain these roads to a standard that is safe for travel by all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019 when I got elected, there was a five-year road plan in place and there was zero work scheduled for South West Arm. At that point, in 2019, the road was in serious disrepair. I always joked about the guardrails and I said I don't know if they're asleep or if they've just been left alone. The guardrails, on some very serious turns, have been literally lid down on the side of the road for three years. There have been hundreds of pictures sent about potholes and conditions. It's a terrible road, very unsafe.

But what really jumps out at me, right in about the middle of South West Arm, is the cut-off for children who attend school in Clarenville. The children that attended school in Clarenville last year missed half of what the children who attend South West Arm Academy. Now, these kids travel the same road. That will tell you the type of maintenance that happens as you get further down South West Arm.

It's absolutely ridiculous. The plows don't show up. Every single morning, people who work at transportation and works travel that road in government vehicles. They see the potholes. They've seen the guardrails. They understand the dangers. The minister has received email upon email, upon email, upon email. As a matter of fact, over the last three years, every year, we've had to go to the department to say we have fish trucks, reefer trucks here to pick up a million dollars worth of fish, a million dollars worth of product, and the trucks have refused to go down there, the roads are in that bad need of repair. It is absolutely ludicrous.

Now, I will say the minister, when I've reached out to him recently for some assistance with the fish trucks and stuff, the work has happened pretty quickly. But we shouldn't have to call the department for that work to be done; it's general maintenance.

As for the comment on potholes, how do you fill them? How do you get the standing water out? Same as they do everywhere else: with gas-powered leaf blowers. We've got recycling machines that government owns that they can use to fill these holes on a regular basis, and certainly, if we're going to use cold patch we should take it out of the bag. Because that's not what's happening.

Anyhow, at the end of the day, the reality of this is that if the maintenance was carried out in the summer and the potholes were filled in properly, it wouldn't create the issues that have in the winter. You can go to my district, travel the roads, and you'll see potholes skipped over that. They use cans of paint to mark them and it wears out.

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

**L. PARROTT:** You can look at my résumé any day the week; I used to do roads, a lot more than you.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

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

Speaker, I move pursuant to Standing Order 11 –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, today, April 11.

**SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, the following resolution:

WHEREAS the Lieutenant-Governor in Council appointed a tribunal under section 28 of the *Provincial Court Act, 1991* to make recommendations on the salaries and benefits of judges and the chief judge; and

WHEREAS the tribunal submitted its recommendations to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety on June 6, 2019; and

WHEREAS the *Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal Report* was tabled in this hon. House on June 25, 2019, as required by section 28.2 of the act; and

WHEREAS the House of Assembly is required to approve, vary or reject the report; and

WHEREAS government has decided to ask this hon. House to accept all of the recommendations of the tribunal as contained in its report of June 4, 2019;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House accept the recommendations of the 2018 Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recommendations of the tribunal be implemented effective April 1, 2017.

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

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

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution today. First, I would like to give a brief history of how we got here and why we’re here this afternoon on this issue.

The Provincial Court Act requires that a tribunal be established to make recommendations on the salaries and benefits of Provincial Court judges. The act requires two things essentially: for the report of the tribunal to be tabled in the House of Assembly, and for the House to vote to approve or vary the report.

The most recent tribunal prepared was the Wicks report, and it was delivered to government on June 6, 2019. The report outlined salaries retroactive to April 1, 2017, for a four-year period. The Wicks report was brought forward with a resolution to the House recommending it be adopted. This was June 16, 2020; the House never voted on the Wicks report.

As a result, the parties, including the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, ended up in court. We also know this is not the first time this has been an issue. In fact, our courts have recognized that the history of the remuneration process of judges since 1991, at least, has been fraught with difficulty.

Specifically, as noted by our courts, unfortunately one of the most egregious aspects of the recent case involving the Wicks report is the extent to which the response of the recommendations was played out in a political forum. On March 24, 2022, the Supreme Court Trial Division released a decision ordering a resolution be put forward in the House again as it was on June 16, 2020, and that the House vote on this resolution. These are orders of the court. Furthermore, cost was awarded against the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on a solicitor-client basis, the highest level of cost that can be awarded.

So that is the background relating to the resolution and why we're voting here today. However, I do want to back up a little bit and talk about why there is a tribunal in the first place that makes recommendations related to judges' salaries and benefits. The outline of the process to determine judges' salaries was developed by a series of Supreme Court of Canada cases. Therefore, we already know the law. We know decisions about these salaries must abide by our Constitution and the main Constitution principle is independence of the judiciary.

The courts have stated it is imperative that the courts be free and appear to "be free from political interference through economic manipulation by the other branches of government, and that they not become entangled in the politics of remuneration from the public purse." This is why there must be a tribunal. The decision related to the salaries of the provincial judiciary needs to be independent of government.

We are in a different position today than the House was in June 2020. At that time, arguments were made for and against the resolution and all comments were made in good faith and fair and appropriate. However, we now have an order of the court telling the House to

perform its statutory duty under the Provincial Court Act and to vote on the report. This was not done in 2020.

However, the court rejected the request to simply adopt the Wicks tribunal without a vote of the House. The court instead is allowing the House to proceed with its obligations. The court stated it was not prepared to find without evidence that this House will flagrantly fail to respect the order of the court, which the order is simply telling the House and the Members here today to follow the law. We are told we have to fulfill our constitutional and statutory obligations and that is what the resolution is about.

While the House has obviously not yet voted on this resolution, the court had sufficient facts before it to determine that a no vote by the Members of this House of Assembly today would be unconstitutional. As I noted already, this process has been fraught for some time and a lot of that has to do with the process being politicized.

Other provinces are not immune to this. In fact, just last week a court decision in Nova Scotia ruled that their process had not followed the proper constitutional procedures. In the Nova Scotia case, the court noted that any discussion around money and salaries is political. In fact, the court said: "Fiscal plans are inherently political." So even debating the issue of judge's salaries in the House makes it a political issue.

That is why we are bringing forward amendments for the Provincial Court Act to ensure that this House will never vote on this again. We are depoliticizing this issue for all future governments regardless of the political party that is leading the government of the day.

As stated by the courts, it's crucial to the rule of law that the judiciary is allowed to function, and be seen to function, independent of the Legislative and Executive Branches. Judicial independence is of such importance to the functioning of democracy that it is considered constitutionally protected from violation by the other branches.

I know some Members may have difficulty accepting the increase in salary for judges, but

this is about more than that. It is about protecting our democracy. We are so very fortunate to live in a country where judicial independence is protected. We are so lucky that a judge cannot be bribed by a politician, or where a judge can make a decision that violates the principles of fundamental justice, or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The vote here today may not be one you want to vote yes on, but sometimes democracy is difficult, sometimes it is expensive and sometimes it is messy. But it is a small price to pay when you think about the alternative.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

It's a pleasure for me to speak on this very important resolution. As the minister has indicated, he's provided a brief history of the problems that we have seen and the fact that this has been, as he's noted, fraught with difficulties, historically.

I must say that we agree, as far as the rule of law, which applies in this case in reference to judicial independence. It is, and must be, a cornerstone of the democratic system. We know that because of the way the process has been in the past, there has been politicization of this issue with respect to remuneration for judges. We know that there must not be any actual or apparent political interference with the judiciary, which places the independence of the judiciary into question. So there's no disagreement on that point.

The importance of depoliticizing the judges and protecting that independence, again, is important to our democratic system and to the rule of law. So as the minister has referenced, and I think this is welcome, I think we can take comfort in the new legislation, the new amendment to the Provincial Court Act, which we will be addressing shortly. That will be a way to address the problems with the process that has existed. It

will be a way to remove the House of Assembly from any involvement in this issue with respect to judges' remuneration.

The Wicks report, which was a resolution brought forward, I think it was in 2020, the Wicks report of 2019, that report did address some factors and that's why it is important to have a tribunal involved in this process, because they look at various factors when they're assessing whether there should be judges' remuneration.

The tribunal was established, the report had been tabled, but it had not been acted on by government. It has to be noted that government has the responsibility here, Speaker. It is not the Opposition's role to bring matters before the House of Assembly like legislation, like resolutions as this resolution or any of the Orders of the Day. It is the responsibility of government, not the Opposition to do that.

That did not happen and we are aware of the consequences of the fact that that was brought before the House for a vote.

I think what's important to note, though, is that now we're at a place where we have an effective remedy, if you will. A way to amend the Provincial Court Act, which, hopefully, once and for all, will address the problems that we have seen as far as this issue and will remove it, will depoliticize this issue going forward.

On that note, I'll conclude.

Thank you.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I'll be brief. Just starting off, it's good to see new legislation incorporate gender-neutral language. It's a sign of true inclusion, not just expanding the language to include he or she but the substitution of person, because it's only with the substitution of person can we include everybody regardless of how we self-identify.

I also want to say when it comes to increases for salaries; I have no issue with anything relating to salaries as long as it's warranted, as long as it's actually a measure of the value and also we have to be competitive, especially when it comes to judges. We have to be able to attract the best and brightest.

Looking at some of the changes made now in Section 27.1(1): the annual salaries of judges to be adjusted to an amount equal to the average salary of the provincial court judges in the Maritime regions. This is a positive thing. It'll make sure that our judges are paid a salary that is competitive.

One of the things that was brought up in the technical briefing this morning was that our salaries are a bit lower. So this is a positive thing for me.

No concerns or issues with the timelines for submission, clarifications, approval, vary or reject.

Just looking at one of the questions now that was brought up in the technical briefing this morning from my fellow MHA in Labrador, Lake Melville. He talked about whether future tribunal reports – will the recommendations be coming to the House of Assembly or will they actually just go before the Lieutenant Governor. It's my understanding they will not be coming before the House of Assembly, but as my fellow MHA in the House from Harbour Main makes really good points there.

Anyway, like I said, I've got no problems with this bill. I will be voting to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a few minutes now to speak to this. I'm not going to say a couple of minutes because when I do, it never seems to work out that way.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, first of all, that I'm a little bit surprised by some of the comments in

the sense that it seems like everybody, all of a sudden, is all kumbaya, we're all great with this. But I just want to remind the House of Assembly that when we talk about this bill – and we're talking 2019, 2020, whenever it was – pretty much everybody that was in the House then is still in the House, or a lot of us are. The same people, not everybody but there are a lot of the same people for sure.

I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker, that as one person who voted against this – first of all, I just want to say and give credit to the Minister of Industry, Energy and whatever the title is now. He knows who I'm talking about. Anyway, he was the minister of Justice at the time and he told us – he was quite clear that we were going to end up back in this House of Assembly if we voted against the raise; he did say it. But, of course, I think with the exception of himself, even his own colleagues voted against him and the whole House basically said no, the judges are not getting a raise. Or most of us, anyways.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** There was no (inaudible).

**P. LANE:** Oh no, it was withdrawn. Okay, that's right; it was withdrawn because they didn't want to. They didn't want to support it so they withdrew it; that's what it was. But they didn't want to support it.

And I didn't want to support it. I have to say that I make – unfortunately, it went the way that he predicted it would go and now it's basically being forced down our throat and we kind of have to support this; we don't have a whole lot of choice.

I just want to say, for the record, that while I did appreciate the minister at the time warning us that this would happen, and he predicted it, I think we all still voted against it, or we were saying we were against it and we did so with our eyes wide open. I make no apologies for it. Now, I'm glad it's being taken out of our hands, in a sense. I'm glad it's being taken out of our hands.

I was adamantly against giving them a raise and I make no apologies for it; I really don't. Because at the time, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that this was a time when our public

servants weren't getting any raises. They were all expected to take zero and zero and so on. We had the Premier saying and the former minister of Finance – Minister of Education now, I believe – prior to that talking about how we might not have been able to make payroll and so on. Needed to be backstopped by the federal government perhaps to make payroll. We were on the verge of a fiscal cliff.

Given those circumstances that we were in as a province there was no way, on principle, if nothing else, I was going to support to give one select group of people who are already making over \$200,000 a year, and then to simply give them a raise while, at the same time, we're saying to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador we have no money and we're almost bankrupt. We have seniors and other people with issues that are struggling to survive, we have all these issues with health care and everything else and now we're going to give somebody who's already making over \$200,000 a raise. It wasn't on for me. And to be honest with you, if it came back today under the same circumstances we're in, I still wouldn't support it. So I'm glad it's out of my hands, because they wouldn't be getting a raise if it were up to me, in that regard.

Not that I have anything against judges. I really don't. I do understand that we can't politicize it, but the bottom line is that's why I kind of even have a concern with this bill, to an extent, because it's talking about the averages for other provinces. They're going to automatically, basically get a raise, or it will be reviewed every year and they could be getting a raise based on the average of other provinces.

So here we are, if the other Atlantic provinces are doing well and they're not in the hole the same way we are and they can afford to give raise and pay higher salaries, we're going to be forced to basically do the same thing, even though legitimately we can't afford it. That's why if there was going to be an independent process and an independent tribunal and everything else, personally, I think it should take into account – and that's what should have happened to begin with, the last time around, is that the formula they were using did not take into account the fiscal circumstances of our province and the ability to pay.

If we were negotiating with doctors, teachers, nurses or public servants, the first thing we'd say is look at our fiscal circumstance. We'd love to give you a raise, but we just can't afford it. We're on the verge of bankruptcy here. But that process never took that into account. It simply looked at, here's the job you're doing and you haven't had a raise so you're entitled to a raise, blah blah. Even under this new process, now we're going to look at it in that same vein; we're not going to look at it from the point of view of where the province is to fiscally.

So everybody else has to tighten their belts, everybody else can't get a raise, but, judges, you're special – and I understand the separation, but you're special. You get special treatment. You deserve your raise. Unfortunately our teachers, our nurses and our public servants, they don't deserve a raise or we can't afford to give it to them, but they're going to get theirs.

I just have a problem in principle with it. I had it then. I was against it then and I'd be against giving them a raise now, to be honest with you. But what this is doing is it's taking now out of our hands. I do agree with the independent process because we do have to separate the judiciary from the politics. I get that. I really do.

I'll support it in that vein. But I do so begrudgingly. I would say that I do so begrudgingly, and I'm glad I voted against it the last time. If was up to me, I'd vote against this time, given the fact that in my mind they should be no different than anybody else. I will support the fact now they're taking it away from the House of Assembly. It will be totally independent, but I do wish there was a mechanism in place that would not just look at the average of other provinces or Atlantic provinces; it would also take into consideration our province's ability to pay. Because that's how we determine everybody else's raise, if they're getting one or they're not getting one.

But we're not going to do it for this group, and again – it's not about judges, per se, not a personal thing. I understand the education they need, that they have to work up, work towards it, and the responsibility they have. It's got nothing to do with that. Brain surgeons have lots of responsibilities, too. But we have to negotiate

with the Medical Association. But in this case, it's out of our hands.

So again, I'll support the bill from the principle of it now being removed from the House of Assembly, fair enough, and having that division. But I do want to acknowledge once again that the former minister of Justice told us this was going to happen, but we didn't support it and we did so with our eyes open. We knew what we were doing. I knew what I was doing, and I don't regret it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm just going to have a few words on this here. We all knew it was going to come back to the House of Assembly again to be passed in this House of Assembly. I've been through it before, back years ago, and I told the minister at the time. The minister told the House of Assembly that this would happen, would cost the taxpayers of the province more money, but the part that surprises me is we all know it's hard to do. We all hate to give them this big raise when the people are struggling, but we need it to remain independent. The judicial system needs to remain independent. That is why the committee was set up and that is why we went through the tribunal, and this is why it was brought back to the House of Assembly.

But the thing that amazes me with it is that I'm confident that this went through Cabinet. When this goes through Cabinet, then this is a government policy that was brought to the House of Assembly. When the minister of Justice at the time, the Minister of Energy now, was up there in the gallery, and then we were debating it – and this bill was pulled. Well, it's not the first time that his colleagues never stood up for him, either. It's not the first time.

But anyway, here he is standing up there in that gallery, sitting in that gallery, approved by Cabinet, on the agenda in the House of Assembly, and then the government, because Opposition were saying we can't do it, we can't do it, withdrew the bill.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Withdrew the bill. They withdrew the bill off the table. Anyway –

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

**E. JOYCE:** I didn't interrupt you.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** I didn't interrupt you, please. If you have something to say, you'll have another turn when I'm finished.

This is what I find, Mr. Speaker, with a lot of this. The minute you bring up the process and how they failed on the process, they take it personal. This is not personal. This is something for the government to learn that if you're going to make a tough decision, make the tough, right decision.

This is what the issue is for me with it; no one in this House wants to give anybody a major raise right now. We know that. That is part of the process. But when the government goes through the Cabinet process and brings this in the House of Assembly and because there is Opposition raising the issues, good, bad or indifferent, government, after being warned by the minister of Justice and Public Safety at the time that we're going to go to court and it's going to cost the taxpayers more money, the bill was withdrawn from this House of Assembly. It wasn't called after they had a no vote called on it.

So I say to the government and to all of us here also, there are times that we need to make the tough decisions. Government are the ones right now that need to make the tough decision. I'm just saying to the government now this is an example where you didn't make the tough decision. You embarrassed the minister of Justice and Public Safety, you were warned that it was going to go through the courts and it was going to cost more money.



My issue with the government, and I implore upon the government, if the decisions that are going to be made, the tough decisions, make the tough decisions but explain it to the people. The minute you withdraw it and take them off the table, they're not going to disappear; they're going to come back. They may come back harder; they may come back and cause more harm – which in this case was a bigger penalty financially for the Province Newfoundland and Labrador.

To the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, I know he's over there listening very attentively, I say you warned us all and you stood up with your courage. I told people that this was going to happen also, because I've been through it before a number of years back. I just want to say to all the legislative people here who are going to vote, if there's a tough decision, let's find a way to make the tough decision for the right people of the province. Let's take this here as a learning experience.

Sometimes we have to make the tough decisions. Sometimes the Opposition and the independents also have to step in and support the government on the tough decisions because they're the right decisions. Just because they're tough that doesn't mean they're not right. And if we don't come together as a group here, 40 of us in this House of Assembly and accept sometimes we have to make a decision that we all don't like – and I'm sure no one in government now wants to stand up and say they're going to give this raise. But we need the independence. That's why the tribunal was set up, the independence of the judicial system in our province. And if we don't have that, no independence, then where are we in our democracy.

So let's take all this as a learning experience from all of us in this House of Assembly and say that sometimes we have to support each other in the decisions for the betterment of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know this bill is going to pass. I say to the minister, I know you had to bring it in. Definitely had to be brought in. So this is no onus on yourself; this had to be brought in by the court order. I say now, let's use this as learning experience. I'll sit down, Mr. Speaker, and I'll say one more thing. There are going to be a lot more tough decisions that the government is going to have to make.

My advice to the government is inform the Opposition, inform the independents, inform the Third Party and inform the people of Newfoundland and Labrador because if it's the right decision that we're going to make, people will come on board to support the right decision that's going to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I, for one – I know I speak for the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – if a decision has to be made that's going to represent the people of Newfoundland and their best interests, we are for it, and we will support the government on that.

I'll sit down with that now. I say to the minister, I know it's tough to bring it in but it had to be done; it just had to be you to do it.

Thank you.

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

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

Speaker, I have a few minutes and just a few comments I'd like to make on this issue. I guess the one, just after listening to a couple of independent Members speak, as an Opposition we have a role to play in this House. It may not be a popularity contest, but we have a role to play. People may not like it on government side. People may not like it on the Third Party, independent side; we have a role to play. We have a right to question government. We're the Official Opposition and that comes with that responsibility.

This pay raise that we're discussing, this resolution, it's going to go through. The minister has made that statement and we all realize that. Because it's our constitutional right, we have no choice according to what the judges ruled, which I find a bit – I won't get into that, but I question all that. All this process I've questioned.

One thing I've always questioned and I've never agreed with, it should never come in here if you want to rubber-stamp. The people put us all in our seats to speak for the fiscal responsibilities of the province, our financial situation, how we spend money. They don't expect us to come in here and be bobble-heads and nod our head yes

or no, when we need to. They want us to give meaningful debate.

We gave meaningful debate to this raised issue. It was pulled from the debate or pulled from the House at the time, but we put up an opposition to it, because I think, in the context, we were right. Our principal decision, we were right. Judges have ruled, the decision has been made, we are legislators, we have a responsibility and they're telling us we have no right to reject this. My comment to that was: Why did it ever come in this House?

Now, I know the minister has made reference that this is not going to happen any more in the future. I can't make apologies for last year, when this happened, because I think we've done everything in our power that we should have done. I don't think anybody should expect anything to come into this House and be rubber-stamped by people in this Legislature.

It's not a time for apologies or what we need to do, and we've got to do things better as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands is saying – absolutely. He has been here a long time and he knows what I'm saying is right. We have a role to play, and we have to stand on our principles. Yes, this will go through. Yes, they will get their raise. Do I agree with the process? No. Do I think this should have come in the House? No.

But it happened and it is what it is. They've ruled. We're accepting of that. Like I say we realize we have no choice, but it's not one champion – the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands wasn't the only champion on that. There was a crowd of champions there; it was the Opposition brought this up, and questioned it. Everyone else agreed, a lot of people agreed and I know a lot of people on government side agreed.

But at the end of the day, we will be accepting this. It's important to make this point and make it clear. We do it because we're legislators and we have to uphold the court of the land. That's what we're built on, the judiciary – it is; we support it. That's what makes us the great country we are, and province.

But never for a second do I think it's fair for anyone to bring something in here, in this

Legislature, and expect us to just rubber-stamp and agree to it because we have no rights. I take offence to that. If this comes in tomorrow on another issue – not just this issue, this is the one we dealt with – any other issue going forward, I will not be standing in my place and saying yes because I'm supposed to do it; don't bring it in here if we can't have a debate on it and question it and vote yea or nay. It should never come in this Legislature.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I can't say I'm happy to speak to this resolution, but I think it's necessary that I do so, given some of my history on this particular issue. I don't think I'd be able to live with myself if I did not take an opportunity to speak to this, which was done a couple years ago, and just speak here today.

The first thing I would say is I'm extremely proud of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice for bringing this forward, for doing the work to make this happen, and I've got to say that we're very lucky to have his counsel and his ability to see through the issues and make the right decisions. So I'm really happy that we are here doing this, and in fact we're going to improve upon this.

This is an issue that has been ongoing now at various times over the last 30 years or more. This has been in this House multiple, multiple times. But I think we've reached a point now where the recent decision of the Supreme Court has put it back on us as legislators and we know that we cannot continue on the same way.

Now, I do want to say, I've listened to the comments from a number of the Members opposite, a number who spoke a couple of years ago and a number who didn't. Now, it's funny because back then I can remember I was actually sat up in the rafters, up there perched by myself. It's one thing to feel like you are figuratively on your own, but I was, certainly, literally on my

own up there as well, because you could see where this matter was going to go right from the first paragraph of what the former Leader of the Opposition said, you knew where this was going to go.

I point out something just said by the Member for CBS, and he's right, it's not a popularity contest. It's not about rubber-stamping. There's nothing popular about bringing in a resolution that involves a pay raise for a group of individuals that, again, is very select in this province – there are less than 30 – and it's easy sometimes to say that the remuneration is fine.

So I get that, and he said we're not going to apologize. I certainly wouldn't ask him to apologize nor do I think there is – but what I do think is interesting and what I need to bring up is that there were seriously deficient statements made in this House and they were done so in spite of knowing better.

Perhaps I am taking this a little personal, but when you sit up there – and, again, it wasn't a popularity contest. Certainly, it wasn't fun when you get up and speak to something and every Member after that speaks basically talks about how terrible this is.

You're hearing the comments for what they are. You know the difference and in certain cases, some of the Members opposite should have known better, but they chose to continue on in spite of knowing better because it's an easy stand to take when you argue against a raise for a Provincial Court judge.

I heard the comments from the Member for Torngat: I have no problem with this value for judges and saying that. But I can guarantee you that wasn't the comment made two years ago by that Member when that Member sat as a Member of the Official Opposition.

I would be interested to know if the point of view was raised in the caucus room. I don't know. But it's raised here now and, again, I find it extremely difficult to sit here and hear that now. I wish that enlightenment was here two years ago.

So that is part of it here. Again, I have the debate right here. I have read it a few times over the last

two years. I have been waiting for this day because I said in the last part of – and we talked about the Members had a briefing – the Members had a briefing two years ago, too. The Members had a briefing, but it did not matter what the facts were because it was an easy thing to do to oppose this, especially in a minority government situation, to oppose this thing which makes it look like we're out there trying to give judges this big, undeserved raise.

I just look through some of the comments and some of them just blow my mind. The former Leader of the Opposition is not here, thanks to the current Minister of Justice. Just one of the statements here: “Will the public have a sense of outrage and disappointment if judges don't get the raise that is recommended in this report? I think not. Will judges themselves be offended? Again, I think not ... many of these folks are friends of mine. Knowing them as rational people who understand the surrounding circumstances of things and are capable of understanding the context of important decisions, I think” they'll understand. He could not have been more wrong.

I'll point out something else that Member – that former Leader of the Opposition, his wife was the chair of one of these panels. She did the one years ago that recommended over a 20 per cent raise. So this is why I am frustrated – I'm not frustrated at every Member. That Member should have known the difference and didn't.

I go on further. The current Member for Harbour Main: “... I would submit or argue that it would be irresponsible to support, with public funds, an increase of any kind to the judges who are involved here.” And here is the other one: “... in the interest of the judiciary itself, I would even say that this is perhaps in the best interest of the judiciary. I would say the members of the judiciary that are there would perhaps agree that they will be better served by us not approving this at this time. ... Because they will not face the public criticism that will surely follow ....”

I know the Leader for the NDP just made points trying to compare it to similar negotiations he went through as a member of the teachers' union, talking about how the ones he went through and this one.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands kind of echoed his points here today. Again, he said the same thing and put it out there.

The former Member for Cape St. Francis, the former Member, I will point out, not the current Member, but the former Member went on a whole lot, again, playing the populous argument.

I listened to all that, and I said at the end, I said, I get what you're saying but we're going to end up back here. I pointed out the difference to the Member. The Leader of the NDP, knew the difference, he knows there's a difference between public sector bargaining and judges. You ought to know the difference, or chose to ignore the difference.

People say no, these judges, they're friends of mine. They're rational people. They're going to appreciate this. I said, well, it's probably going to end up in litigation. I can almost guarantee it. I was right.

I guess what I'm saying is that, look, I'm glad to see we've all come together here now, after two years and after hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars spent in legal fees, hundreds of thousands that could be paying for potholes, that could be paying for so many things and they're not.

I will point out the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands did support it. He did. He never got a chance to vote, but got it, because he had been through this before. I put that on the record. But everybody else, we never got to that point, and a lot of it is because, again, I give credit to the current Member for Harbour Main, the current Leader of the NDP and the former Leader of the Opposition who politicized this process and took us down a road that cost us a lot of money.

On that note, I'm glad to see the current Minister of Justice bringing this forward. I'm glad to see, as somebody said, that we have learned from this process, learned from the mistakes that we have made and, hopefully, we can continue on going forward.

On that note, Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Thanks to everyone who made their comments this afternoon. I appreciate all the positions and arguments made for and against, and the history of it.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 11, Bill 44.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that Bill 44, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 44, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991." (Bill 44)

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

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

I'll just speak briefly on this here this afternoon. The proposed bill will amend the *Provincial Court Act, 1991* to address matters relating to the Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal.

There has been delay in the tribunal process, which has been noted by our courts. These amendments will help ensure that the tribunal process operates in a timely, depoliticized manner, maintaining the province's constitutional obligations. Judicial independence is a constitutional requirement, and to maintain judicial independence judges must have security of tenure, administrative independence and financial security.

In relation to financial security, the Supreme Court of Canada has found that judges and governments are precluded from direct negotiation of salary and benefits. The courts have found that while judges are paid from the public purse and are public servants, they are not civil servants or government employees. The financial security of judges is therefore ensured by independent, depoliticized judicial compensation commissions.

In Newfoundland and Labrador the *Provincial Court Act, 1991* establishes a tribunal, which is tasked with making recommendations on the salary and benefits of Provincial Court judges. Under the current act, a tribunal must review and provide recommendations on salaries and benefits to the minister not later than four years since the date of the last report. The tribunal's report is then tabled by the minister in the House of Assembly within 15 days of receipt and the House must accept, vary or reject the report within 30 days of it being tabled.

Recent decisions from the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador have noted that the tribunal process has faced delay, retroactivity and politicization. The court ordered that the government and Provincial Court judges engage in consultation with regard to the act and the tribunal process. This consultation has occurred.

The proposed amendments will: Implement a formula for the calculation of salary. Salary will be based on the average salary of provincial

court judges in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI. This is to be calculated as of April 1 every year and implemented effective July 1 every year. It shall include retroactive salary increases.

Require a tribunal to be established on or before June 1, 2020, and tribunal recommendations on or before December 1, 2020. This tribunal will consider the period April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2027. Require a tribunal to be established on or before June 1, 2026, and tribunal recommendations on or before December 1, 2026. This tribunal will consider the period April 1, 2027, to March 31, 2031.

Require that a tribunal be established and recommendations received every four years thereafter. Require the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to approve, vary or reject the tribunal report within 60 days of the minister having received the report. If the Lieutenant-Governor in Council does not address the report within this time frame, the recommendations of the tribunal will be considered accepted. Recommendations regarding salary will only be accepted by default if they are in accordance with the salary formula prescribed in the act.

These amendments protect judicial independence by depoliticizing the process of determining the salary and benefits for Provincial Court judges. Prescribing a time for appointment of tribunals and a firm deadline for the receipt of the tribunal report will help to address the delays and retroactivity historically faced in this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

This bill to amend the Provincial Court Act, again, as referenced earlier, is a welcome amendment. We know that now we will have in place a process that, again, will remove the contentious issue of salaries and remuneration for judges. It will remove it from the forum of the House of Assembly.

So this bill will amend the act, requiring the salary of justices to be adjusted annually, based on the average annual salary of provincial court judges in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. So that, I think, will be a more effective way for this issue of the salary increases for judges to be addressed. Some of the other points that were raised in amendments in this legislation go to the composition of the tribunal, and it will prescribe the composition of the tribunal, set that out. There's no issue with that.

It will require the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to appoint a tribunal to report on salary and benefit of judges, and there's no issue with that as well. There are also timelines in place that will require the tribunal to submit a report to the minister and the president of the Association of Provincial Court Judges, so there are no contentious issues there either.

There's an appeal process in place as well. The bill requires that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council has to approve, vary or reject the report and gives a set time for that of 60 days. If it's not approved or varied or rejected within the time frame by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, then that means it will be considered accepted. There's also gender-neutral language, which of course we have no issue with.

So I think the most important and significant amendment here is with respect to the process and allowing this now to be removed from the House of Assembly. As stated, we don't want to see the spectacle that has existed to date in terms of the comments that have been made. We need now to see a more effective process, one that depoliticizes this entire issue. I think that this will accomplish that.

We know that other jurisdictions, it is my understanding, also have this process in place, other jurisdictions within the country. I believe Ontario has this type of formula and the federal government as well as Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. I'm not sure why it has taken so long for us to get to this process. I believe that it has been a recommendation that was made many years ago by other justices that government consider this kind of process, but for some reason that did not get addressed and was not in place. At least now, we're seeing it. So I think that in that regard it's a good thing.

As well, with respect to the fact that we will still have a tribunal in place – under the former system there was a tribunal but now, in addition to this formula, this averaging of the salaries of Provincial Court judges, this salary calculation will take place every year. It will automatically occur every year. Now, we still see in conjunction with that, it's my understanding, that there will still be the tribunal performing an important role as well. They, of course, will be assessing things from a broader scope and assessing other factors as well, which may be unique to our province here in Newfoundland and Labrador which may not apply in the other Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. I think that's also a distinction to be made, and it is relevant as well.

I think that sums up some of my points that I wanted to make on this legislation but, again, I believe that it's good piece of legislation. A long time coming, but at least it's here now and we would support that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just very quickly, I will support this bill, as well. I'm not going to repeat all my comments that I made when we approved the raise, I guess. But just to say that, again, my only concern – I'm glad that we have this process now that takes it outside the realm of the House of Assembly. It is far more palatable, if you will, for me. But just for the record, I still do have a concern over the fact that I don't think this takes into account the financial circumstances of the province and the ability of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to pay.

That's what got us to this point on this last motion, was the fact that we were broke – still broke, still borrowing billions of dollars. So we're all clear, while this process may be no doubt independent, it depoliticizes it and everything else, at the end of the day, we've got a select group of individuals who, regardless of

the fact that if we were about to declare bankruptcy, they're getting their raise anyway.

At the same time, we're saying to all of our other public servants who are still being paid for by the public purse: I'm sorry, you don't get an increase. We're saying to our nurses: I'm sorry, you don't get an increase. We're saying to our teachers: I'm sorry, you don't get an increase. We're saying to our physicians: We can't afford to give you an increase. But we're going to have this independent process for a handful of people, albeit not a lot of money because it is a smaller number of people, but the principle is the same. They are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians just like everybody else in this room and they're getting special treatment. That is the bottom line.

Now, I understand why we're doing it and I'm going to support it but that is still the bottom line and, on principle, I disagree with that.

Thank you.

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

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

I echo the sentiments from my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands that it is good that we're taking this outside of the realm of the House of Assembly. We are the pillars of government and the judiciary and those are all equal and those should never cross each other.

Having the tribunal report back to the House of Assembly for voting on, with the recommendation that you have to vote yes to this, is hard to palate when you're in a room where you're supposed to make decisions and vote with the will of your constituents. So having it removed from this realm and into a realm where it is debated and looked at separately and outside of here and still falls within the rules of the Constitution is important.

We have to take into account that there is a reason why their remuneration was not supposed to be political, but if you bring it into the House of Assembly, it instantly becomes political and that is a thing, too.

I'm glad that we have this, but there are other aspects of this, too, that we need to look at that. There are other times that something similar to this may happen and maybe we should look at getting out in front of it. I know we've had debates about our own remuneration in here – about should it come to floor of the House of Assembly or not, these things, too.

So this is one of those things where we look at now we found a solution to it that other jurisdictions follow. We're going to go follow along with our Atlantic colleagues in the sense that we're going to use their average so we have a baseline, but if this is something we did now, where was it a few years ago? If there were recommendations made in the past about it, I guess the warning wasn't heeded at that time.

But I will support that we will move away from having this ever come to the House again and that we actually have set timelines and a set system per se to do this.

With that, I do support this system and taking away the political side of it and, I guess, keeping afoot with the Constitution Act and the role of the judiciary in this province.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, the debate will be closed.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I think I might have misspoke on some dates regarding proposed amendments so just to be clear. One of the amendments will require a tribunal to be established on or before June 1, 2022. I think I might have said 2020. And tribunal recommendations on or before December 1, 2022. I think I might have said 2020. This tribunal will consider the period April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2027.

Other than that, I want to thank all of the speakers during second reading today. I look forward to questions and Committee.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 44 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991. (Bill 44).

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a second time.

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 44)

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

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 44.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 44, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991." (Bill 44)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I understand that the model that was used is based on the Atlantic Canada provincial court judges, averaging the salaries of those courts.

Can you please explain why this model was used?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Chair.

I guess there are several reasons why this is used. One is that some of the tribunals, certainly the most recent one, the Wicks tribunal that we've talked about here today, has said that the Maritimes average is a good – if not the best – comparator for Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court judges. It also makes sense to use the entire Maritimes region as a comparator. If you do look at salaries for other provincial court judges in other jurisdictions, outside of the Maritimes, it actually is quite a bit higher than



Atlantic Canada. So we felt that using the Maritimes average was an appropriate comparison for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We did also discuss the use of a formula with the Provincial Court judges' association. So they were well aware and thought it was a good idea to use the formula going forward.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Looking at the court case of Justice Daniel Boone, I know there was reference made there to a negative resolution method. However, there was a decision made to choose the yearly automatic salary adjustments tied to average salaries of Atlantic Canada provincial court judges.

So why was the adoption of the negative resolution method not chosen?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** The salaries are set, as the Member outlined there, with regard to that legislation and the Maritimes averages. The tribunal then, respectively – eventually when we catch up on the last two years – will review the adequacy of those salaries going forward. When the report is presented, the LGIC then has an obligation review the report and to vary it or approve it or make adjustments as the LGIC sees fit.

One provision that we've added here, I think, is the negative resolution, where if nothing is done – it's going to be now in section 28.2(6). If Lieutenant-Governor in Council does not act on it, which as we have seen in the past, governments have not acted on tribunal reports, the recommendation shall be considered to be accepted if nothing is done. So that is a negative option there, and it does put a positive requirement on the government of the day to do something with the report and not just sit on it, because if they do sit on it, then they will be implemented pursuant to the legislation.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So I know also that the judge in the decision also referenced the fact that discussions only really got it started three years after an order by Justice Faour. Can you explain why there was a delay of three years?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** I can't explain why there was a delay. Certainly, the reason that we're bringing this legislation forward is to avoid those delays and, as I just talked about, this new section of the legislation will essentially eliminate any possibility of delay once the report is delivered to the minister.

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

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

I believe we have 24 Provincial Court judges in our province. I'm wondering about how many judges are in these other specific jurisdictions of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI. Because under their legislation I know that they have also prescribed numbers of judges that are in place.

I'm just wondering in regard to the issue of workload, how will that be a factor for us, where we have 24 judges? I mean if you have double the number of judges when you're having these kind of assessments take place, that's going to impact the outcome.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** The workload comparison is why we chose to go with the Maritime average; it's the best region to compare Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to, not just for judges' salaries, but a lot of things in our lives. We're the most similar to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI than we are to, say, BC, which has large cities like Vancouver, Ontario, which has large cities like Toronto and Ottawa. It is a different region than what we have, it is a different makeup than what we have, and judges face different issues in those regions compared to the Maritimes.

So we did feel that the Maritime average and the Maritime makeup of those courts and the judiciaries in those provinces best matched Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

I'm aware that the second Wicks Tribunal looked at various factors, one of them being the cost of living. I guess that would also apply here with respect to Newfoundland having a unique situation in terms of cost of living, perhaps the highest cost of living in most of these provinces. So does that factor into it again, why the Atlantic provinces were used as opposed to say comparing to Ontario, for example?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Yes, again, we did feel that it was the region that would be the best comparator, to compare Newfoundland and Labrador to, as opposed to centres that just don't have the same geographic makeup, the same population makeup that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Also noting that a lot of those salaries in the other jurisdictions are significantly higher than in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout Maritime Canada as well.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I think that that concludes my questions.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I'm just wondering, in coming up with this new process, was there any consideration at all given to the concept of the province's ability to pay? That's kind of how we got here to begin with. I'm just wondering about even that court

ruling that went against us, it's fine for a court to rule and say well, there was a legitimate process in place, there was a tribunal and here's what they recommended, and the House of Assembly weren't prepared to approve it; but if that tribunal from the beginning was arguably flawed in that it never even took into consideration our fiscal circumstance, then maybe the ruling wasn't based on all the information.

I'm just wondering, in terms of that ruling, was there even any consideration given to our fiscal circumstance? Why would there not be something brought forward with what you're doing here today to take that into account?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you very much for the question.

A couple of things on that is that both sides to this, the judges and the government, I guess, for lack of a better way of saying it, do get to make submissions to the tribunal. If one of those submissions on behalf of the government is the ability for the government to pay, the government of the day at the time, those submissions will and can be made to the tribunal. So the tribunal is obligated to review those and look at those and discuss those before it makes any final recommendations.

Now, the way the legislation is drafted, of course, it's telling the tribunal that it does need to apply the Maritime average. The tribunal can comment on the adequacy of it. At the end of the day, it's the LGIC that has to accept, vary or accept the recommendations in the tribunal report.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Minister.

Basically then, if what we're doing here has to be the average, then the fact that we could be – based on that, we could be on the verge of bankruptcy and everybody in government could be taking a rollback in salary, all our civil servants, theoretically. But if the Atlantic

average is what it is, they're getting their raise regardless of that circumstance. Is that correct?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** It's also an assumption with that question that the Maritime judges' salaries are going up. So I can't talk in the future about what the decisions of Nova Scotia, PEI and New Brunswick governments are going to be. But one of the reasons that we do look at the region, I think we do feel here in Newfoundland and Labrador similar economic effects as our Maritime neighbours.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** I appreciate that, Minister, and I realize we can't control what's happening in other provinces, but I guess one could argue that it was this province that was the one that was saying we couldn't make payroll, not Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. So I guess the point is – and I am just trying to seek clarification because, undoubtedly, I will have constituents or people will reach out and ask about this. So I just want to make sure I'm crystal clear.

Basically, what this comes down to is we're going to look at that Atlantic average and if other provinces get a raise and so on then, regardless of our fiscal circumstance, the tribunal is going to be bound to simply do the calculation, do the average and say yeah, I understand where we are to provincially but they're entitled to their parity and that's what they're getting. That would be how it would work, right?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** That's correct. That's the way the legislation is drafted. It's for the salaries to be set based on the Maritime average and for the tribunal to review the adequacy of those salaries, and then for the LGIC to look at the report that's presented by the tribunal.

**CHAIR:** Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 27 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 27 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 27 carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 44.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 44.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them

referred and have directed me to report Bill 44 without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee reports the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report Bill 44 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader or, sorry, the hon. Government House Leader

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I was only gone for a week.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

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

Now, I'm going to stand up and I could tell you – like the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – that I'm only going to take a couple of minutes, but I wouldn't be honest if I said that, so I will tell you to settle in because it's going to take me a little bit of time to get through this.

It's a pleasure to stand here in the House. A lot of what I'm going to say, I'm sure you won't agree with, but then that's okay, too, because that's what democracy is all about. It gives us an opportunity to debate here, and when we leave this Chamber, we walk out and we can have calm conversations with each other. I know we

all have the same interest in mind and that's helping the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We can rant and we can roar, but, at the end of the day, we'll all still be on the same page.

I wanted to start off by firstly talking about my district. I represent the District of Stephenville - Port au Port and for those of you that have the pleasure of visiting the district, you know it is a district steeped in history. It has a very rich Indigenous heritage and culture, a very rich French culture and it has farming and fishing, as well as mining. So there are lots of activities going on in the district and there is certainly room for many more.

We have an airport that is a valuable asset to this province and to all of the people of the province and also a seaport. Both of which are underutilized at the moment but certainly have the potential to be huge players in economic development in this province.

I wanted to say a few more things about Stephenville. One thing is acknowledge that the budget did provide \$8.5 million to change the current location of the courthouse and make it accessible. However, there appears to be some challenges with that in that a lot of people that have called me did not seem to have any consultation on the process or weren't involved in consultations.

The Town of Stephenville itself clearly did not know about the choice of the particular building or the location and several other key players that are instrumental in providing justice services seem not to have been aware of the choice of location and the choice of buildings.

So I simply ask, as I wonder, because we are moving out of a 70-year-old building to move into a 60-year-old building and spend over \$8 million doing so. People are asking the question: What was the rationale behind that decision? We have none provided yet. So I am looking forward to seeing the rationale on how the decision was made to replace a 70-year-old building with a 60-year-old building and move it from Stephenville to Stephenville Crossing.

If I could be so bold, I would suggest that's like moving the courthouse from Corner Brook to

Gillams, or from downtown St. John's to the Foodland in Torbay.

There doesn't appear to be any logic when Stephenville is clearly the hub of the region. The bank facilities are in Stephenville. So if you've got to get money because you have to pay for a bail bond or anything, you have to do it in Stephenville. All the legal offices in the region are located in Stephenville. The John Howard Society is in Stephenville.

So there are a lot of players in Stephenville, and a lot of reasons why Stephenville is the hub. It's the major shopping centre for the entire region.

Again, I would hope that this decision – please don't tell me that it was simply a political decision. Please tell me that you can provide rational reasoning that other options were looked at and you are willing to provide that information openly and transparently to the people of the entire region so that we can know that a decision was made for all the right reasons.

It's great that we're actually going to have physical accessibility for the disabled, but we are perhaps going to geographically and financially make it inaccessible to many people. We're moving the courthouse from the most populous region, centrally located, to one of the other areas of the region. So, again, I would like to simply ask that you table the documentations, table the information that was used to make this decision.

It's great, any time we get investment in our area, in our region, it's good to see that, but I would simply ask that you please provide us with how that decision was made and what criteria did you use in making it? Because on the surface, moving from a 70-year-old building to a 60-year-old building and moving it from a hub to outside doesn't appear to a lot of people to be a good business decision.

I simply ask that you share that information in the House so that everybody will know exactly on what grounds the decision was made and that it wasn't made on political grounds. Thank you for that piece.

Now, as I get into the budget, I want to simply talk about what did we need to see in the budget. What we needed to see was a clear plan for growth, federal engagement and immediate help for people. What did we get? No plan for growth, federal neglect and spare change for people. This, Speaker, is the great disconnect. The great disconnect between the government and the people of the province.

If I like to tell a little story that will underline that, we've all heard about Little Johnny and some of his escapades. Well, there was a group of soldiers marching down the street and Little Johnny's mother was standing on the sidewalk and she made a comment to someone: Look at all the soldiers marching down the street. Everyone is out of step except Little Johnny. And that's exactly what this government is; it's out of step with the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

But don't take my word for it. While Members opposite were out door-knocking on the weekend drumming up support for their budget, people of the province were taking to the airwaves to talk about their displeasure with the budget. So let's take a look at a few of the stories that we've heard over the past 48 hours or more.

In *The Telegram* this weekend, they talked about the graphic that was included with *Budget 2022* to highlight government initiatives to help low-income earners, but the numbers left many people puzzled.

"Dara Squires knows what it's like to earn \$17,000 a year while raising three children as a single mother.

"That's why she laughed out loud when she saw a graphic in the provincial budget this week which is leaving many people scratching their heads, wondering how it adds up.

"It's titled, 'How we're helping with the cost of living,' and it shows a family of five who rent their home and take the bus. Their household income is \$16,000.

"Then there's a list of ways government is purportedly saving the family money. Among the list is \$7,800 savings in child care; \$87

savings at tax time because the family spent \$1,000 on physical activities; and \$2,400 in power bill savings thanks to rate mitigation. Altogether, government estimates it's keeping \$13,270 in the family's wallet."

"It's very unlikely that anybody who created or looked at this graphic has actually lived in this situation because they would have immediately seen (the errors),' said Squires.

"Squires left her spouse roughly a decade ago with three young children in tow. The youngest was three years old, and the other two were in school.

"She worked from home as a freelance writer and earned \$17,000 annually. She had to work from home because her youngest child had a lot of medical appointments, and it gave her flexibility.

"Because she was working from home, she didn't have child care costs. In comparison to the mythical family in the budget graphic, she was already saving a bundle.

"There's no way that families is paying for child care. There's no way that they're paying for most of those things that they had listed there', she laughed.

"Squires also didn't have a rent bill because she was living in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

"But with such a low income and three children to raise, every day was a struggle.

"The primary thing then – and it would even worse now with the price of groceries – was feeding my family. I just couldn't do it. I had to go to the food bank,' she said.

"To this day, I remember getting a sauce package for beef and broccoli in my food bank package, and I was like, 'I cannot afford beef or broccoli, so what do I do with this? I guess I can add it to some rice and a can of tuna and see how that tastes.'

"The line in the graphic about physical activity tax credit savings – \$87 if the family spends \$1,000, was particularly unbelievable to Squires.

“Yeah, sure, they have \$1,000, and they’re going to spend that on physical activity? No,” she laughed.

“Squires recalled how her children were able to participate in physical activities thanks to the **REAL (Recreation, Experiences and Leisure) Program**, which matches children in financial need with one recreational activity of their choice.

“Even with the help of such a program, participating in extracurriculars is still difficult for low-income families because transportation can be prohibitive, and there are frequently other added costs.

“My kids did a dance program, and I actually had to pull them out of it before the end concert because I couldn’t afford the costumes for that finale show. I was like, ‘Well, they can’t do that. I just don’t have \$130 for a leotard.’

“As for the power bill savings, Squires said a family earning so little is not spending that much money on electricity.

“‘You’re not turning on your lights or your heat. You’re making the choice between food and heat most of the time,’ she said.

“My housing came with heat included, so my power bill was about anywhere from \$50 to \$70 a month for my hot water and my lights. And I wouldn’t have been able to afford more than that.

“In fact, at one point, I got behind on my power bill and was nervous about being shut off. So, even at that low a rate, when you’re making that little money, all you need is one sick kid and you’re not paying your power bill that month. Or a kid who’s outgrown their winter coat and it’s not the time for Coats for Kids yet, and you can’t get another winter coat (from them) – you’re not paying your power bill that month.

“Squires said the graphic is ‘another example of how out of touch the government is with the poor of our province.’

“Eventually, life got a bit easier for Squires when all of her children were in school and required fewer medical appointments, and she

worked her way up to a career with a local software company, but she’s still paying off debt from that time.

“‘It takes years to leave poverty behind. It’s been quite a few years already, and I still get nervous when I look at the fridge and there’s not a lot of food in it ... That anxiety is always over you,’ she said.

“And living in the situation, I mean I know people who lived in the same housing area that I did whose kids were diagnosed with PTSD because ... of the instability in their life. Not knowing, you know, is there going to be food when they open the fridge door?

“Mark Nichols is an anti-poverty activist with Workers’ Action Network.

“He said he was mind-boggled by the graphic.

“‘I don’t know what to say about it. I don’t have a rational thought about it because it’s so out there,’ he laughed.

“Unless this is a family in non-market housing, like Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, or some other affordable housing, they wouldn’t have much left over after rent, and then they’re saying childcare savings of \$7,800. After they pay their rent, they wouldn’t have money for child care.

“Nichols said there was nothing in this year’s budget that tells him low-income people are a priority for government.

“I want to see something more serious from the provincial government when it comes to low-income people because it is a significant percentage of our population who are struggling to make ends meet, and now that struggle is expanding beyond the low income.... I know they want to be seen as trying to take care of everybody, but it always seems like the dregs get thrown to the low-income folks.

“NDP Leader Jim Dinn said the graphic is an insult to low income earners.

“‘If there’s anything that emphasizes that they just don’t get it, (it’s) that graphic,’ he said.

“Finance Minister Siobhan Coady said government is investigating the numbers.

“SaltWire Network questioned Coady about the graphic prior to her speech at the St. John’s Board of Trade luncheon at the Alt Hotel in downtown St. John’s Friday morning.”

This is what the minister said: “Let me really focus on what the most important things are in this,’ she said, and went through the list in the graphic to highlight the various initiatives, such as childcare savings moving to \$10-per-day by 2023, and government efforts to prevent the doubling of electricity rates.

“So, don’t get focused on the amount of household income – focus on what we’re trying to achieve here, and that was just telling a story.”

Now, think about this, the minister says they are investigating the numbers in their own budget graphic one day after the budget is released. That’s not good enough. This government doesn’t appear to know what it’s doing or what people need or why its approach is so miserably failing to meet that need.

From VOXM: NLMA Says Provincial Budget Does Not Address the Health Care Crisis.

“The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association says the province is in an ‘absolute crisis’ when it comes to health care, and they don’t believe yesterday’s budget does anything to address it.

“President Dr. Susan MacDonald says she has a number of concerns with the budget from a health care perspective.

“She says many rural health care centres can no longer deliver sustainable services because the physician workforce is so destabilized.

“MacDonald says the situation in central is the worst, noting that many sites have been reduced to one doctor, and within a few months they could have none at all.

“She likens the situation to physicians trying to plug a dam that’s about to burst. She says it is a

dangerous situation for the physician and for the patient.

“MacDonald is calling on government to step in with a plan to save the sites before it is too late.”

Also from VOXM: “NAPE President Jerry Earle says there is still a lot of work to be done to address major issues within the health care system.

“He says ... the human resource problem being experienced in the system is ‘not sustainable.’ He referenced diversions currently happening in Harbour Breton and the Bonnews Lodge in Badger’s Quay as examples.”

From CBC: From 4 to 1: Regional health authorities to be folded into single board.

The minister “said the CEOs of the regional health authorities were told about the amalgamation on Wednesday evening – and they saw the changes coming. He said the Health Department will be looking for a new CEO to govern the new provincial health authority.

“He said some people may leave their current roles but would be offered ‘comparable’ roles, while others may retire.

“‘This is not about mass layoffs or layoffs of any kind,’ he said.

“Jerry Earle, president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees, insisted that no jobs should be lost in the transition from four regional health authorities to one.

“‘There is nowhere in health care right now where we can afford the loss of a single person,’ he said.”

“Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association president Dr. Susan MacDonald panned the possibility of closing emergency services in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. She said she would’ve liked to see the province spend more on retaining and recruiting family physicians.



“Virtual care has a role to play, for sure, but it does not replace having a family physician,” she said.”

Also from CBC: NL medical officials left with questions amid plans to bring health authorities together.

“Yvette Coffey, president of the province’s registered nurses union, said she ... knows her members will have concerns over moving to a single health authority.

“Our members will have a lot of questions around that, what that means for them, will there be job losses,” Coffey told CBC News Friday.

“We would hope that there would be a transition and a discussion with stakeholders ... to ensure that there is a workers’ lens put on any decisions that are made.”

The provincial government says it’s too early to tell if the move to one health authority will result in job losses.”

The minister “also announced Thursday the provincial government is bringing post-secondary medical programs, including pharmacy and nursing, under one province-wide faculty of health – something that originally caught Memorial University President Vianne Timmons off guard.

“If there were conversations, they weren’t with me, which is very possible because we’re a big, comprehensive university,” Timmons said Friday.”

“Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association President Dr. Susan MacDonald said she’s cautiously optimistic about the idea, but says the devil is in the details.”

“... ‘I don’t know how that’s going to play out. And I’d like to see a lot more details about that.’”

There are lots of stories that continue to be played out on the news channels. On NTV, the province’s nurses say: Thursday’s provincial budget provided no surprises for their profession, and say the main issue of recruitment and retention still remains.

I heard earlier today one of the ministers talk about the wonderful news on the Metrobus passes and the great initiative there, but here’s what St. John’s city council had to say about it: St. John’s city council says they were blindsided by a funding cut in the provincial budget, which will impact public transit.

The provincial government says, quote, change is in the air with the release of the 2022 budget, but the City of St. John’s says they were blindsided by a change to their public transit funding. Councillor Ian Froude said: It’s extremely frustrating to get that news. The City of St. John’s offers free bus passes to those on income assistance, which is partially funded by the province.

The budget outlined funding cuts at the same time as an expansion to those eligible for the program. Minister Siobhan Coady said: Metrobus is now expanded. It used to be just for those on income support, now it’s for seniors and youth at risk, so we’re expanding out that program. Froude said: We agreed to add seniors on the GIS and youth in care to the program, if the amount budgeted was \$2.1 million but \$1.9 million was outlined in the budget.

Froude said: By them lowering it to \$1.9 million and then adding those people in, we actually have the \$300,000 hole in the public transit budget for the city going forward and that’s extremely substantial to that operation. Now they’re worried about the future of the program. Froude said: Well, it will likely mean that the program won’t exist past a month or so going forward. It’s required that we have \$2.1 million. We are already, as a city, heavily subsidizing public transit in the city.

Froude says: The city puts \$6.5 million into the program currently. Froude said: There seems to be a mentality here that we can be squeezed for additional money on it because we’re not putting in enough. But we’ve already putting in an extremely substantial amount to enable this program to exist.

He says: The program used to require recipients to show proof of eight medical appointments a month to show their need for the pass. He’s worried now they will have to prove their need

for the pass, causing more strain on the health care system as well.

Froude said: People were coming to them for appointments just to get those eight appointments total so they could get free transportation because they needed it. They needed the transportation to get around the city, so I know we don't want to go back to that. We know that's bad for the community. I know from the comments yesterday regarding the budget, I'm sure family physicians don't want that burden added back to them, and people want certainty on how they're going to get around going forward.

Councillor Froude says: 5,600 people avail of the program each month. He hopes the provincial government will change their minds on the decision before they have to make changes or cancel the program.

NTV: Nurses' union says no recruitment or retention solutions found in *Budget 2022*. The province's nurses say this week's provincial budget had no surprises, but the main issue of recruitment and retention still remains. Throughout the pandemic, nurses have been voicing concerns about being understaffed and overworked. They say yesterday's budget announcement of \$3 million to increase the number of seats in Memorial University's nursing program is welcomed, but not nearly enough to address the nursing crisis.

This is not a nurse's budget; it's not really a health care budget. Yvette Coffey of the Registered Nurses Union of Newfoundland and Labrador says: Immediate solutions for recruitment and retention weren't found in yesterday's budget. We would have liked to have seen more around retention and recruitment of registered nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care providers.

We do know that they do have a health HR strategy in the office for retention and recruitment but that hasn't come to fruition yet. We're waiting on the details of that.

As for health care in general, the Nurses' Union says they're relieved yesterday's budget didn't contain any cutbacks. Yes, there's more money and we know that not one job can be taken out

of the health care system without an impact on both the workforce and ultimately the patients that we serve throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. So we're glad to see an investment in health care and there wasn't a 25 per cent cut that was recommended by Moya Greene's task force.

Changes to the health care system in *Budget 2022*, again, according to NTV. The government says the Finance Minister made a comment: We're making very strategic investments in health care. We've seen that health care, even up until the pandemic, was very flat. We were holding the line on expenses in health care, but because of the pandemic and the outcomes of the pandemic, we've had to increase.

The budget included a promise of more investment in retention and recruitment of health care professionals, but, again, the Medical Association says it isn't enough. Dr. MacDonald says: Are we going to fix health care? I don't think so. It's a crisis. Something has to be done now.

Incentives outlined in the budget include additions to post-secondary nursing programs. MacDonald says it may be too little too late. Small initiatives like asking a new grad to stay for an extra \$100,000. Well, that sounds great. If you divide it up over several years, it's really not that much.

The government has outlined more critical care programs for Central where doctor retention is a clear problem.

MacDonald says: We have people putting in their resignation almost every week and there are many communities in Central that have one physician literally holding back the dam.

Health Minister John Haggie says: Virtual care has now established itself within the offering of health care provision in a way that we hoped we get to in a few years time, but it really got a real kick in the pants from COVID.

NAPE says: They were surprised to hear more investment in health care after the Moya Greene Report last year suggested cuts. He says that thanks go to health care workers who rallied against the cuts.

NAPE President Jerry Earle said: The bottom line, a lot of this would not have happened unless members took to the streets as they did on health care. We're seeing an investment in paramedicine, LPNs and PCAs; that's because these individuals stood on the sides of the streets on days like today and were consulted with, and look where we are when we have that collaboration.

So there have been lots of people talking about the budget, not just the people on this side of the House but people in the streets. There's been lots of conversation about what wasn't in it and what needed to happen. Unfortunately, for a lot of people they did not get the help they thought they were going to get.

But the Budget Speech was heavy in one thing and that was rhetoric. Let's unpack some of that. Let's talk about some of the nice words that we saw in the Budget Speech.

The first one was: Resilience. The first word in the speech, standing alone: Resilience. Resilience usually means the ability to adapt and bounce back. But why can't the government adapt? Where's the plan to adapt to inflation? How can people bounce back when their circumstances are holding them down?

Resilience also has a negative meaning: to recoil. People are recoiling from the government's lack of responsiveness to their needs in the budget.

Another one: We have weathered this storm. The day has arisen with brighter skies and calmer seas. No, I would suggest people are still being tossed by the storm. All is not calm; all is not bright.

This is a good one: The fog is lifting. That fog analogy means that government didn't know where it was going. Lost without direction or a plan. The fog is lifting to reveal a province off the path with no sense of where to go: lost in the fog, lost in the bog.

Another quote: We will stay focused on doing what is right within the means that we have. So you're actually saying you lack the means to do what's right – an excuse.

Another one: What we all want to achieve – a self-sufficient Newfoundland and Labrador. Self-sufficiency would be possible if we had control of some of the levers: our oil, our fishing industry, et cetera. Self-sufficiency should not mean being abandoned to do it on your own. A disengaged Ottawa has left us without the tools or the fair revenue we require.

This is a favourite one for my friends opposite: The Muskrat Falls project and the decision to build it remains a burden on this province. As much progress as we have made, one can't help but imagine how those funds could have been used to lower taxes and make further improvements in health care and education.

Once again, they are speaking out of both sides of their mouth. They say the project is a mistake, forgetting they supported it at sanction. Ottawa's new emission plan actually says Muskrat Falls is a positive. Net zero would not be achievable without it. So instead of blaming it, they should be getting more federal support so we can afford it.

The electricity is benefiting the entire country's emission plan. Why should our own people be left with the bill when you promised to deliver a mitigation plan that would spare people the impact?

Ottawa: The inevitable question to PCs, of course, is what would you do differently? One thing we would do differently is demand billions on fair federal transfers. Imagine what that money could do.

A CBC news story excerpt on the federal budget the same date as ours, quoted: "Notably missing from this budget is a substantial sum of money for Canada's health care system.

"... the budget does not project any major new increases to the Canada Health Transfer to the provinces and territories.

"... Freeland said the federal government will convene a meeting with provinces and territories soon to settle on an increase to that transfer – something Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised in the last election campaign."

Freeland said: “It’s something that takes a lot of time.”

In actual fact, Ottawa made the same promise seven years ago to reform transfers. That’s seven years of missing revenue – billions. Imagine what that money could have done.

So instead of fighting Ottawa for fairness, two provincial Liberal regimes have let them off the hook, forcing our people to make up the difference in tax hikes and cuts.

Another CBC news story on the federal budget said this: “It’s a noticeably thinner budget that left some of the Liberal Party’s major 2021 election promises on the cutting room floor. A number of those commitments – most notably more money for health care, mental health and long-term care, and more support for seniors – were slated to roll out starting in this fiscal year.”

“While the budget allocates billions in new spending to rein in a hot housing market and help with the transition to a cleaner economy, it was all but silent on a major election promise: billions of dollars to support the country’s long-term care system, which has been particularly challenged by COVID-19.

“Research suggests Canada’s LTC facilities have recorded some of the worst COVID-19 fatality rates in the world.

“To address this, the Liberal platform promised \$6.7 billion over the next four years for that file – a cash injection to ‘improve the quality and availability of long-term care homes and beds.’

“In August 2021, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also promised to spend \$1.8 billion over four years to raise the wages of personal support workers (PSWs) to at least \$25 an hour and train 50,000 more of them to prop up a faltering system.

“Freeland’s budget projects just \$1 million in new spending on long-term care beyond the 2021-2022 fiscal year. In the 280-page document, there’s only one brief mention of LTCs.”

“Freeland’s budget also doesn’t include another promised policy for seniors – a \$500 increase to the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for low-income seniors and \$750 for couples. That nearly \$4.2 billion commitment was supposed to take effect this fiscal year; it’s not accounted for in the budget.

“During the election, the party promised \$3.2 billion for the provinces and territories to hire 7,500 new family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners starting in this fiscal year.

“It was money earmarked to expand access to primary care in a country where, according to StatsCan data, 14.5 per cent of the population – about 4.6 million people – say they do not have a regular health care provider.” And we know what the stats are in this province.

“COVID-19-related restrictions have exacerbated mental health concerns and addiction issues across Canada but the problem is particularly acute in the country’s rural and remote areas because access to services is so poor in so many communities, says a report recently released by the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

“The Liberal Party identified this as an issue in the last election. Speaking at a campaign stop in August, Trudeau said ‘the past 18 months have been really tough’ and Canadians ‘deserve the right support and that includes on mental health.’

“Trudeau promised to create a new Canada Mental Health Transfer, with an initial investment of \$4.5 billion over five years.

“That money isn’t in this budget.”

So the feds obviously have not provided or lived up to what they had committed to. Where is the fiscal stabilization or the fair equalization for this province? It could have resulted in billions of dollars being injected into the economy.

It’s fine to stand up and say we love Ottawa for letting Bay du Nord go through. Imagine, the feds allowed Bay du Nord to go through. Why did they obstruct it? Why was a report that was recommended that passed through the environmental assessment process months

earlier not acted upon? Why did it take such an extreme length of time and then a further delay?

We were being held hostage by some MPs and ministers in other provinces. How does that happen? Why did they refuse to support exploration? And I guess, fundamentally, why are we fighting our own federal government to get good projects approved using our own resources?

Make no mistake about it we owe them no gratitude. We owe no gratitude to that federal government that refused to follow their own advice when it was recommended to them on that particular project months earlier. Even their support for Muskrat is borrowed against their take from our offshore, but not enough to fairly offset the debt for a project benefiting all of Canada.

What about fisheries management, instead of threats to cut fishing and grow sea grass?

Section 36 of the constitution says: Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to (b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities – reduce disparity in opportunities.

We, in this province, are at the losing end of a widening disparity gap. Where are the targeted federal jobs and growth planned for Newfoundland and Labrador? Ottawa just announced Canada's first lithium-ion electric vehicle battery manufacturing plant for Windsor, Ontario; \$4.9 billion and 2,500 jobs starting in 2024. Imagine a venture like that here.

When it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador, Ottawa seems to be on another planet. They are raising interest rates to cool the economy, hurting debtors even more. If only our economy needed cooling. Unfortunately, we're at the bottom end in growth. This province lacks leadership on the federal stage and that's one of the reasons, I guess, why Ottawa is so disengaged.

Let's talk about some statistics and the evidence of poor growth. The government wants us to believe it has a plan, but check out *The Economy* document, which is sometimes overlooked. Page

12 lists the forecast of the real GDP growth by province for 2022. Newfoundland and Labrador is forecast to grow by just 0.5 per cent. No other province is expected to have growth below 2.6 per cent. Canada is expected to grow by 4.1 per cent. Newfoundland and Labrador is the clear outlier on our own.

On page 13, the table of Provincial Economic Indicators is telling. Some of the news is positive, but some is anything but. Household incomes in real terms are forecast to decline in 2022 by 0.7 per cent and not grow in 2023 either. The leftover disposable income of households – what you actually have to spend – in real terms is also forecast to decline by 1.1 per cent in 2022, and decline in 2023 as well. So as fuel prices go up, as the cost of heating your home goes up, as the cost of purchasing food goes up, the disposable income of houses is forecast to go down. Not a good trend.

Our population is forecast to grow in 2022 by just 0.4 per cent; then 0 per cent in 2023; 0.1 per cent in 2024; 0.1 per cent in 2025; and 0.1 per cent in 2026. That is not growth. That is stagnation. Page 18 says the birth-to-death ratio for Newfoundland and Labrador, 0.6, was the lowest of all provinces. Losses from natural population changes accelerated for the fifth consecutive year reflecting the province's aging population and low fertility rates.

Page 3: Economic recovery in 2022 is expected to continue at a slower pace than experienced in 2021. I'm not sure if that's reassuring.

Page 4: The value of mineral shipments in 2022 is expected to be down by 20.2 per cent.

Page 5: Rising food prices and the return towards pre-pandemic production levels will likely drive farm cash receipts higher for some commodities in 2022. Prices of farm inputs are projected to rise, which will likely result in increased prices for farm products. Not good news for the people who eat farmed food.

And while employment is expected to grow from about 220,000 last year to about 225,000 this year and 232,000 by 2026, that's well under the approximately 240,000 people that were working in this province around 2012 to 2014.

The labour force is expected to remain around 256,000, well below the 270,000 from 2012 to 2015. That makes our unemployment rate look deceptively good. Our economic forecast would look better than this under a solid jobs and growth strategy.

Let's talk briefly about the cost of living and, again, the disconnect from the people. Members voted unanimously in the PMR on doing more to help with the costs of living. People expected help with escalating high prices. The government certainly had room to do something. People were underwhelmed. In the VOCM poll, 73 per cent expected more. Again, the only change in the year is the spare change you've tossed to the desperate.

There's help for those with money to spend on home renovations or electric vehicles. For home renovations, people will get a rebate of up to \$5,000 on a total bill that could be \$10,000 or \$15,000. For electric vehicle charging infrastructure, a \$2,500 rebate on purchase or lease of all electric vehicles and \$1,500 rebate on purchase of plug-in hybrid vehicles.

Most of the people contacting us on this side of the House are not so fortunate and cannot come up with the upfront cost to convert to electric heat or buy an electric vehicle. Even the government's own *The Economy* document says the CPI rose 3.7 per cent in 2021 and will rise 3.9 per cent in 2022. Food prices are up and will rise higher.

These are price increases in essentials. We're not talking about luxury items; we're talking about essentials. And, of course, we all remember the 300-plus tax and fee increases of 2016, which, by the way, most of them are still in place.

Recall again, what the Health Accord said about the health impacts of poverty on page 52: "Income is one of the most important social determinants of health. It shapes overall living conditions, affects psychological functioning, and influences health-related behaviors. It determines the quality of other SDH such as food security, housing, and other basic requirements for health."

Page 59: "Research shows social, economic, and environmental factors account for a greater impact on health outcomes than does the health system."

"The World Health Organization states that poverty is the largest determinant of health." There are many people living just above the poverty line who are also at risk.

Page 62-63, "Food security and housing security are among the many social determinants of health. They are also two markers of poverty. Food insecure households have poorer self-rated health, poorer mental and physical health, poorer oral health, greater stress, and are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and mood and anxiety disorders." Our province leads the country. We have "the highest rates of diet-related chronic disease in Canada, and St. John's has been named as the city having the highest level of food insecurity in Canada."

Food insecurity also makes it difficult to manage existing chronic conditions such as diabetes. Children and youth who experience hunger repeatedly are more likely to have poorer health, and children who face hunger repeatedly are more likely than others to develop several chronic health conditions.

Speaker, if you leave people poor, you leave them at greater risk of getting sick; not just sick but chronically ill, heavily dependent on our costly health care. This is the advice to government from our own Health Accord report. Why are we ignoring it?

An investment in affordability is an investment in prevention. An ounce of prevention, as they say, is worth a pound of cure. Investments in affordability will also recirculate in our economy creating jobs.

You told us you would focus on doing what's right – quote – within the means that you have. You said you wished you had more money. You also said the budget is about making choices. Again, I will argue it was your choice not to press the Government of Canada for fair transfers so that you would have had more money to invest. Your choice to invest \$5 million in Rothschild, and open a new Premier's

office, and not secure the federal health funding equalization and stabilization we needed. One can't help but imagine how those funds could have been used to lower taxes. Again, failure on the cost of living.

Let's look at, again, *The Telegram* story from the weekend where they interviewed some the government claims it is helping to the tune of more than \$10,000. When she saw the graphic, she laughed because it showed just how out of touch this government is with the situation of people like her.

Again, she said, "There's no way that family is paying for childcare. There's no way they're paying for most of the things that they had listed there ...."

"The primary thing then – and it would be even worse now with the price of groceries – was feeding my family. I just couldn't do it. I had to go to the food bank ...."

So, again, Mark Nichols, in talking about what government had done, said there was nothing in this year's budget that tells him low-income people are a priority for government. He says, "I know they want to be seen as trying to take care of everybody, but it always seems like the dregs get thrown to the low-income folks."

Those were his words: throwing the dregs to the poor. In other words, throwing spare change.

Spare change is all that's in the air from this government. Not the \$13,270 dollars in relief the minister pretends a poor family is getting when she releases her preposterously out-of-touch graphics. It's akin to saying the people have no bread, then let them eat cake.

The government cannot say it wasn't warned that more would be needed. As an Opposition, we took great pains to inform government that more would be needed.

From *Hansard* on March 15, 2022, our leader: "... just moments ago the Liberal government tried but failed to address the rising cost of living in our province. While increases in the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit will help some of our most vulnerable, there is

no relief at the pumps, grocery stores, rent or all bills for the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian. This is a case of too little too late. We've been calling for decisive action since November.

"I ask: Did the minister forget to make changes to the gasoline tax and the home heating fuel tax?"

"These are welcome announcements for a small part of our society who are very vulnerable, but the other hundreds of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are feeling the crunch here with the increased cost of living are getting no relief at the pumps or in the grocery store ... and any other service that they need right now, because of this government.

"It's clear this announcement was made today only because the Liberals started to feel the pressure from the citizens of this province, and were afraid to face this House without coming up with some solution that would benefit the people of this province.

"... the Liberal government stated again and again how they could not make any changes to taxes, yet other provinces have taken decisive action to reduce the cost at the pumps and grocery stores.

"Will the minister admit her announcement does nothing to lower the skyrocketing costs of living for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are faced with this stressful situation?"

He went on to say, "I think it's disingenuous to ignore the needs of hundreds of thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians ... who won't be able to ..." make ends meet "right here in Newfoundland and Labrador as we speak ...."

"... people are having trouble affording to live here and the federal Liberal government is making it worse .... the Premier sits back and lets Ottawa decide Newfoundland and Labrador's future.

"We need to know: Whose side are you on, the prime minister or the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?"

Again, our leader: “The amount of money that was” allocated in the five-point plan “just announced is a small pittance of what’s needed in this province to address the cost of living for our seniors here ....”

Again, on March 16, it was raised again by our leader. “People who received the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will receive and extra \$11.25 every three months, which is a 12 cent-a-day increase. The minister said that your government is here to help but I ask the Premier: How does an extra 12 cents a day help someone who is struggling to afford groceries?”

He went on to say, “We acknowledge the fact that the priority at the beginning should be the most vulnerable, but 12 cents a day is going to do very little for any sector here, particularly the most vulnerable.”

“Seniors will get an increase of \$131 in the Seniors’ Benefit, which is less than \$11 a month. I’ve heard from seniors who are already behind on paying their oil bills.

“How will \$11 a month help them put oil in their tanks?”

“Giving pennies to people who are vulnerable and thinking that’s going to help them get over this crisis is an insult to those people. More has to be done.”

Again, “Yesterday, I was approached by a mother who between her and her partner earn \$51,000 a year. They have two children in school and they’re now saving their pennies to try to afford to go to school and participate in sports tournaments.

“Why has the Premier failed families by ignoring them in yesterday’s public relations event?”

This was all happening prior to the budget, back in March.

Again, our leader, “All we ask the administration to do is be proactive, not reactive. They’re not being proactive again with the needs of people as they face financial crisis here.

“Yesterday, the Premier left three ministers in charge. Instead of coming up with ways to reduce the cost of food, fuel and rent, they instead admitted that they had no plan to help the middle class.

“Now that the Premier is back – will you fix the mistakes from yesterday and announce an actual cost of living plan?”

Again, as we found out, there were no changes to their plan. Again, on March 17, 2022, our leader asked questions again trying to get this government to take action, real action on the cost of living.

Again, I quote from *Hansard*. “Yesterday the Premier said, and I quote: ‘We all understood the importance of the cost of living. I think we are all here because we want to make a difference.’ Yet seniors, those on low and fixed incomes are repeatedly again and again how the plan announced isn’t enough to support them and ignores the needs of everyday Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feeling the cost of living crunch.

“Will the Premier finally listen to the people of the province and introduce a plan that works?”

“We know it was a start, but, Mr. Speaker, people can’t wait a month or two before the budget is passed here to actually deal with the cost of living crunch that they’re facing on a day-to-day basis.

“The Premier himself admitted their plan was flawed. He said, and I quote, ‘... it is not the last of the plan and the minister will speak to budget.’

“Why does the Premier wait for the budget to be announced with additional measures when people cannot afford to pay their bills today?”

“... I don’t know if it’s knee jerk when people can’t go to work anymore because they can’t afford gas, when people have to leave their home in the morning and find somewhere where it’s warm because they can’t put their heat on and when people have to make a decision between food and medication, because of the additional cost of living. I’d prefer to have a



proactive approach here than a knee-jerk reaction.”

Again, let's here from the Member for Cape St. Francis. This is what he had to say, he said, “Let me be clear, from the seniors I've heard from in my district who are cutting their prescribed medications in half to try to get them to last throughout the month, we need to do something. We all need to keep that in mind ....” More was promised.

Last Wednesday, we brought a PMR calling for more than the five-point plan. It read:

“WHEREAS Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are urging the government to provide some relief from escalating high prices which are leaving many people in dire straits; and

“WHEREAS government decisions, such as lowering certain tax rates or offering home heating rebates would provide relief that many people urgently need; and

“WHEREAS the Health Accord says the social determinants of health such as income for food, medicine and housing have an even greater impact on health outcomes than the health system.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge the government to consider providing some much needed relief from escalating high prices in the 2022 budget.”

Before the House unanimously passed our PMR calling for more than the five-point plan, the Minister of Education spoke on behalf of the government. Here's some of what he had to say. “This is an important topic. There is absolutely no question. I don't think you'll see any argument from either side of the House on the importance of this topic, and the strain that individuals in the province are feeling.

“We've seen substantial increases in the cost of gasoline and home fuel heating. That's been brought about as a result of global shortages, in part due to the war in Ukraine. Nonetheless, providing that explanation doesn't make it easier

for families. We've seen increased food prices and even automobile prices as a result of shortages related to the pandemic and supply issues. It doesn't make it any easier because you provide that definition or that explanation.

“It is impacting families; it's impacting people provincially, nationally, globally. People throughout the country are feeling the same pressures, and it's a pressing issue for government. I know that government just recently, March 15, released the five-point plan to assist with the cost of living, and I understand that it's the most vulnerable. It doesn't hit necessarily the lower middle incomes. It certainly doesn't impact the middle income. It is the most vulnerable that that plan at the time was designed to assist.”

“... I did want to indicate to Members and those who are viewing the broadcast of the House of Assembly that we all hear the concerns. We hear calls from constituents.

“So it doesn't matter what product you look at, the cost of all products have increased. It's cold comfort to say that next year or the year after when the global shortages of some products is corrected that prices will increase; families need to be helped today.

“So I look forward to tomorrow's budget to see what else is in there that will assist with families.”

That is the Minister of Education speaking. Not the Leader of the Opposition, or the Leader of the Third Party, it was the Minister of Education and what he thought was needed. He said he looked forward to tomorrow's budget. The Minister of Education sure sounded hopeful. But like the rest of us on this side of the House, the budget did not deliver what everyone had hoped to see. It missed the mark by a long shot. And if people's concerns were heard, they were obviously ignored.

The Minister of Finance cannot say she wasn't told what she needed to do. Even her own caucus and fellow Cabinet colleagues know what people are demanding. We, as the Official Opposition, have given her plenty of

suggestions. For months now, we have been offering concrete solutions that government could have taken to bring down the cost of living for people in need.

February 25, we sent a news release out and said: “Review the taxation charged on gasoline and home heating fuel to determine if tax rates can be lowered or if a different taxing structure could be taken in order to lower the consumer price of gasoline.”

We said: “Ask the PUB to review the 5 cents per litre charged on gas which was implemented when Come By Chance stopped producing.”

We asked: “Implement a Home Heating Rebate program to offset the cost of home heating fuel for low income individuals and families.”

We asked to “Delay the implementation of the sugar sweetened beverage tax.”

We asked to “Commit to not increasing taxation rates as recommended in the Greene Report.”

We asked to “Conduct a review of all taxes and fees charged in the province to determine their impact and remove any taxes and fees which are not efficient or effective.”

We asked to “Make fresh foods, including fruits and vegetables, available free of charge in schools and through community food banks.”

We asked to “Work with local producers, including dairy farmers, to lower the retail cost of goods produced and sold in Newfoundland and Labrador.”

On March 24, 2022, we talked about the fact that Quebec was the latest province to provide tangible relief, offering residents who made less than \$100,000 per year a \$500 payment.

Section 11 of the Budget Speech is called Economic Growth and Job Creation. It consists of four sentences highlighting one initiative: a 10 per cent tax credit for new capital equipment in three sectors. Many of the other sectorial initiatives in the budget are about continuing existing programs rather than unveiling new, innovative, targeted initiatives for growth.

Moya Greene is the only person the government appointed to develop an economic recovery plan. Instead, her PERT team gave us a slash and burn plan. When asked about his own commitment to appoint a chief economic recovery officer to lead growth initiatives, the Premier wasn’t even sure of its status.

The government lists 24 plans in its Way Forward page but no longer talks about them. Might as well have called it the way nowhere. The million-dollar McKinsey report is gathering dust, which is a shame, because it had solid proposals to grow sectors such as aerospace, ocean tech, international education, investment attraction, digitalization and aquaculture.

The words digitalization, aerospace, ocean and aquaculture were not even mentioned in the Budget Speech. How can we grow our revenue base without bold investments to turn opportunities into new industries and jobs? Where is the bold planning and investing?

The government is coasting on the successes and initiative of Valentine, Marathon, Equinor and Verafin, but there are things the government can do to capitalize on those successes and other opportunities. We are underwhelmed with the lack of economic initiative in this budget.

The 2020 Mills report on the pandemic reported: “Regulatory burden continues to be an issue for many industries and reduction in red tape was raised by various industry groups.” Mills said the need for a competitive regulator regime was raised in almost every interview. Businesses described it as a complexity/uncertainty and bureaucratic overburden. So where was the red tape reform we needed to see in this budget?

We have also seen that a lot of money budgeted for 2021 was unspent. In some cases, the allocation for this year is less than the allocation for last year.

Let’s go to talk about reports for a minute. I want to call this section implementation failure. We’ve mentioned some of the reports this government has commissioned or reviewed that have been only partially implemented or largely ignored. As a matter of fact, there are so many reports, it’s a wonder that the government doesn’t have a department of shelving to build

stacks to store them on and deal with the population growth of dust bunnies.

There's the Rothschild report that none of us are allowed to see, we're not allowed to see it, to inform decisions you never intend to justify, to get rid of crown jewels that might actually be worth more than the fireside sale price; selling the walls to pay the mortgage.

Besides McKinsey and Mills, there are 24 Way Forward plans with grand names. Let me go through them: *Building For Our Future*; A vision for sustainability and growth; *Realizing Our Potential*; another one: Tourism Product Development; another one: Autism Action; Cultural Action; Education Action; Social Enterprise Action; Digital by Design; Business Innovation; Immigration, number one and number two; Adult Literacy; Agriculture; Aquaculture; Forestry; Mining; Technology; Climate Change; Community; Workforce Development; *Advance 2030*; Mental Health and Addictions; democratic reform; election reform; regionalization; educational outcomes; the Independent Tax Review that was generally ignored; the ATIPPA Statutory Review that will also probably be ignored; search and rescue; LeBlanc; long-term care; inclusion; the Jesso report on the fatalities in correctional facilities. Clearly, the Adverse Health Events report of years ago has been forgotten. So, too, has the Fitch report and others on ambulance services. The report of the Seniors' Advocate, who's position sits vacant; about 18 reports of the Child and Youth Advocate since 2015; the Deloitte report on shared services for health care; a health shared services model supply chain implementation plan; numerous reports telling the government that Meditech needed to be replaced; the *Newfoundland and Labrador eHealth Review* by Healthtech, which recommended IT of RHA be consolidated in NLCHI, advice you are now ignoring as NLCHI goes into the department.

That is just a sampling.

But where are all the advances these reports called for? After seven years, why isn't the province reaping the rewards of all that work?

In golf, when you ask for an extra free stroke after the previous swing was poorly played, it is

called a mulligan. This unfortunately has become a Liberal habit. Why does it always seem that this government is starting from scratch year after year?

First, it was the hotshot team of economic advisors. Then it was *The Way Forward*. Now, it is PERT and CERO and *The Big Reset*. It is beginning to look a lot like mulligan's island.

Let's talk about youth. One of the reasons the province is struggling fiscally and economically is that we are losing our young people and failing to attract others. Our population pyramid is inverted; too few youth to support our seniors. Jobs are scarce. We need to nurture a climate for job growth and diversification so young families can stay and immigrants are retained.

Education is soon to become too expensive for many. At the post-secondary level everyone is nervous about the phase-out of the long-standing tuition offset and the impact of huge tuition hikes.

MUN drives innovation and immigration. We can't afford to lose our edge. Try to imagine homegrown successes like Verafin without that base at MUN.

McKinsey said we are graduating too few computer scientists for the opportunities at home. We should be leading in the enormous global digital space, but not if we kill the goose that lays the golden egg. Do not play foolish games with our future.

The plan to audit MUN came after the tuition hike announcement, which has not been paused to await the audit. What if the hike could have been avoided? Stop pretending the Board of Regents is the only driver of this hike. You pretend to respect MUN's autonomy but the budget announcement to merge health faculties caught MUN completely off guard. So much for autonomy.

At the K-to-12 level, NLTA President Trent Langdon said there's a major recruitment and retention issue in this province right now for teaches. We're seeing it. There's not enough substitute teachers. That longer term vision needs to be there. There's a piece we would have liked to have seen and as well more

information around the dilution of the school board.

Administrative changes do not address the primary need in education. While the government is focused on administrative changes, youth are suffering. Young people told the Health Accord there are too few supports for youth in crisis. The new Suicide Prevention Action Plan for people of all ages is welcome but many youth need access to counsellors and mental health professionals who are in short supply. They can only hope they can turn to one another for the help they are not receiving from professionals.

Health: We wonder if the budget should have waited for the Health Accord implementation report so more changes could have been started now in this year's budget so better outcomes could have been achieved sooner. The government is focusing on the accord's administrative recommendations, integrating RHAs and integrating the air and road ambulance system after years of doing nothing. But the primary need in health care is improved patient access – priority one.

Ottawa's disengagement and failure to fund fair and sufficient transfers is pathetic, that this government's seven-year failure to make our own case to Trudeau and his friends. So where is the funding to set the accord in motion? Not only Trudeau but also this government has been in office for seven years – seven years to do something.

Here is the Health Accord's indictment of this government's record on page 102: "Currently, up to 20% of residents of NL have no access to a family physician (FP), and many more lack timely access. The health system is fragmented, uncoordinated and difficult to navigate. Providers are working in silos and expressing burn out. High turnover rates of providers lead to lack of continuity of care and high costs to the system to support locum coverage. More primary health care providers and an integrated approach that includes social supports and services are urgently needed to support the population and the vision of community teams across the province."

For years now we, and health care professionals, have been calling for integrated front-line teams where scope of practice is respected and access is assured. Why is government only now talking about reimagining the health system seven years later? Why not reimagine the health care system seven years ago, that you could be delivering better outcomes today? How much longer do we wait for recommendations?

The Accord said the social determinants of the health have a greater impact on outcomes than the system itself. The Accord's authors were saying this long before they reported it, so, again, we ask why this government did not engage Ottawa for funding? Ottawa has been shortchanging all provinces, including ours, for years.

The Accord's recommendations will require significant new health spending from the start. Guaranteed basic income cannot happen without Ottawa's lead. Cost-of-living investments this year would have addressed major social determinants that lead to unhealthy lives and poor outcomes, but you held back. Saying you lacked the means rings hollow when you let Ottawa off the hook. At some point, we have to ask, where does the buck stop?

We've had the same Health Minister for the past seven years. The Health Accord on page 206 states: "According to the Commonwealth Fund analysis, Newfoundland and Labrador has the worst health system performance among the ten provinces in Canada based on the integration of multiple metrics." We've had the same minister for the last seven years. The minister's approach hasn't worked.

Five years ago, in March of 2017, we asked this same Health Minister to accept the NLMA's call to review the province's health system and develop a proper plan. Instead of saying yes, five years ago, the minister denied the need for change. Here's what he said: "Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that as part of *The Way Forward* document, health, as part of this government, has a very clear vision of where we want to go with a primary health care, patient-focused system that is distributed in communities, which is, if you like, a step care model which has been referred to in the all-party committee on which the Member sits, where the right provider in the

right place at the right time. I think those facts align very nicely with *The Way Forward* document.

“We don’t have a strategy Mr. Speaker. We have a plan and we’re going to implement it.”

That was five years ago – five years ago. It took our own party, I guess, to call for a health accord. That was our policy borrowed by the current Premier when he sought to take over from his predecessor. He kept on the Health Minister, who had been in denial for years, rejecting call after call for a proper plan and reform of our health system. It’s not just that we wasted valuable time that could have been used to improve outcomes; it’s also that the minister attacked the very people calling for reform, creating a hostile, unwelcoming atmosphere, chasing away the professionals we need.

How can anyone have confidence that the same minister who rejected the need for a health accord five years ago can now be trusted to implement it? How can anyone have confidence, particularly after seeing this year’s budget, and realizing that so many of the reforms the Accord authors wanted to get under way this year in 2022 are glaringly absent?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** We are relieved the rhetoric from the Premier and Moya Greene about tough decisions and amputation did not shape this budget. We credit a strong pushback from the people in the Opposition for that. In the last election, the Premier backed away from his earlier, scarier rhetoric. It remains to be seen if administrative consolidation in health, education and other sectors will lead to job losses. You’ve promised no massive job losses, but even moderate job losses can decimate a struggling region or community, and fear of cuts can stymie investment.

When we talk fiscal management, the elephant in the room – actually the elephant is not in the room – it’s the transfer-withholding Trudeau federal government. The parliamentary budget officer reported that we are missing out on the equivalent of 1.5 per cent of GDP annually in

equalization. One point five per cent of GDP annually in equalization equals billions of dollars. We’re also short on fair annual health transfers in the billions. So billions are on the line when Ottawa stalls the offshore sector or hurts fisheries.

We hear a lot of blame about the hydro debt, but they were the ones who promised a mitigation agreement that would not impact taxpayers. So why didn’t they deliver? A better mitigation deal that better reflects how much Canada is truly benefiting from this province’s hydro resources would reduce our debt payments.

The current and former Liberal administrations have mocked us for demanding that they stand up and fight more vigorously for our people and our province. Newfoundland and Labrador’s future used to be decided around the table in London, England during the Commission of Government, and now it seems to be decided around a table in Ottawa, Ontario. We all have to be charting our course as masters of our own destiny.

The budget speaks of an ambitious agenda and an aggressive strategic plan, but there is neither an agenda nor a strategic plan to be seen. The business community is saying the same thing. In fact, the budget numbers, projected and revised, are all over the place. The only inkling of a plan is the secret \$5-million Rothschild fire sale plan to raffle off the Crown jewels, selling the walls of the house to pay for the mortgage.

A sound fiscal plan would be based on jobs and growth strategy. As we said in our Blue Book, you cannot cut your way to prosperity. We need to grow our way to prosperity, and that’s how we would get our finances under control without destroying the province in the process.

We would get our economy back on track by doing more with what we’ve got: cutting red tape and creating tax credits to help employers hire; kick-starting resource projects and value-added production, maximizing local benefits, and partnering to grow outside markets; embracing the green economy and fueling high-tech jobs with venture capital; tackling corruption that’s scares away investors; taking our fight for fairness to Ottawa and demanding a

targeted jobs and growth strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Newfoundland and Labrador is bursting at the seams with opportunity and potential. Few jurisdictions on earth can boast of such a wealth of resources, energy, forests, minerals, fisheries, farmland, attractions, history and culture. Our people are among the most resilient in the world, tenacious and smart, fighters and survivors, with a dogged determination to never give in and never give up. Others have generated great wealth with far less. Imagine what we could do with all we have.

Just a decade ago, we were leading the country. We all remember how that felt. There is no reason in the world why we can't do it again, do it better and sustain it longer for generations to come. This is the reason we step forward to serve because when we travel to Newfoundland and Labrador and engage in heart-to-heart conversations with our people that is exactly what we hear people say.

We are blessed with opportunity, blessed with potential, blessed with a resolute determination to succeed and leave our children and grandchildren better off than we have ever been. Our success as a province is not just possible; it is inevitable if we make jobs and growth our overriding priority, our ultimate goal. The future we get is the future we choose. The choice is always in our hands.

As a government, we would fight for a new fiscal arrangement with the federal government. We would renegotiate the equalization formula to end the discrimination against provinces that rely on resource revenue.

As per section 36 of the Constitution of Canada, we would call on the federal government to come to the table with a joint federal-provincial recovery plan to address population decline, with an emphasis on immigration and job growth. We would demand a greater share of all federal-provincial funding arrangements.

We would lower taxes and offer tax credits to stimulate job growth. Business owners and operators say the greatest impediment for small business, the job-creating backbone of our economy, is the excessive burden of tax and red

tape. We would slash red tape, freeing businesses from any outdated rules that restrict job growth. We would implement an aggressive red tape reduction strategy, to liberate business owners to spend more time generating new products, attracting customers and creating jobs.

We would collaborate with communities and industries to identify local prospects for development and growth and work with them to seize opportunities that will enable our communities to prosper. We would invest a portion of the income tax paid by new hires back into the business that has hired them. To further encourage job growth, we would reduce payroll tax on full-time employees over time to ensure business owners hire more and focus on full-time employment for precarious positions.

We would expand supply chains that support all economic development. We would prioritize growing our population so more people come to call our beautiful province home. We would keep more young people here by establishing a graduate retention program that provides a tax credit, to a maximum of \$20,000, when post-secondary graduates choose to work in this province.

I briefly want to spend a few minutes –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I do, I have lots of time.

About three years ago, Canada's national library acquired a book that was to be used in the personal library of Adolf Hitler documenting the location and activities of Jews living in Canada and the United States. Clearly, his maniac plans were not meant for Europe alone. If we had not resisted and he had won the war, imagine his final solution playing out on North American soil.

In the 1930s, prior to Confederation, when Newfoundland was run by Commission of Government, thousands of Jews sought refuge here but were turned away. Of the 12,000 who wanted to come here, only the tiniest fraction were allowed in. One publication says the number was just 10 – not 10,000, just 10 people. It was described as one of the most tight-fisted immigration policies anywhere. Imagine if they

had been given refuge here how they could have transformed this place. Imagine what many of them faced instead.

Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it. We must be open to welcoming refugees displaced by war: Syria, Afghanistan, war-torn countries in Africa and Ukraine. Western countries cannot send their armies into Ukraine to defend the people and repel the aggressor for fear of bringing about a nuclear world war. What we can do is accept refugees and share our home. That is how Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are.

The UN estimates 4.4 million people have fled Ukraine since February 24. We have plenty of room for them. Canada should help our province accept a great many refugees and grow our population in the process.

We should also welcome Russians who have been displaced by the current leadership in Moscow because of their opposition to this war. Russians rejecting war and favouring peace are being hunted down, arrested, fined, jailed and chased away.

We can showcase a society of tolerance where people from all backgrounds can live together in peace and harmony. This is one of the parts of the Budget Speech I applaud. We must address intolerance and racism through education and intervention and embrace the characteristic we are all best known for in the international community, our welcoming hospitality to all corners from away.

Thankfully, our people are not facing what the people of Ukraine are facing. They are not suffering inhumane brutality or witnessing the massacres of the innocent, but neither are our people basking in the lap of luxury, celebrating the passing of the economic storm that has gripped us in recent years.

The minister said we have weathered this storm. We may have been lashed by it but today has arisen with brighter skies and calmer seas. Unfortunately, that statement is shockingly disconnected from the circumstances of many people in our province right now. It's just like the same graphic that people are ridiculing in the news. It is out of touch.

It is ordinary people who are pointing out that the budget is doing far less than the minister's own numbers say. If anyone understands the true impact of what the minister has offered to struggling families, it is those families. No one understands budgeting better than the family counting pennies to buy food, medicine and heat. They know where every penny is going, let me assure the minister.

Let's be fair, this is not all on the minister because budgets always come before the Premier and Cabinet before they come before the House. This is on the entire government.

Days earlier you were saying the five-point plan was exactly what the doctor ordered. Then you realized it wasn't. So all of you voted in favour of the PMR saying the five-point plan was not enough. Now you've been told by ordinary people that you've missed the mark again. So what are you going to do? Admit once again that you've come up short or double down in support of what was delivered on Thursday.

A week ago you were celebrating the fact that struggling families could not get a rebate on their purchases of electric vehicles or home renovations. We pointed out to you that families are actually worse off than that. People in this province are struggling to feed themselves, heat their homes, pay their bills, buy their medicine and give their kids the basics of life. It really is that bad.

We are hearing that families who once donated to food banks are now lining up for donations. That is how high their costs have risen relative to their financial means. It is not about cutting corners on Christmas gifts or cutting short a vacation south. Families are having sticker shock in the grocery aisle. People are leaving bills unpaid and hoping their services aren't cut off. People are dividing their medicine to stretch the supply. This is real hardship; this is what a crisis looks like for families.

People are upset because they feel abandoned. We, on this of the House, are hearing it from families. I believe the Members opposite are getting the same kind of calls. So this is not merely an Opposition Party challenging a government for political points. They have no interest in trying to score political points off

people's misery. Even as I am speaking here today, I am seeing the faces and hearing the voices of people who have contacted me, desperate for assistance.

What galls me the most is knowing that government had options. We gave you options. Others on this side of the House gave you options. Community leaders gave you options. Ordinary people gave you options. You could have budgeted what you had differently. You could have helped people while investing in growth initiatives to create jobs, get money circulating in the local economy and expand the revenue base, something that has been sorely lacking for the past seven years.

You could have put people before politics and raised the plight of our people to the federal Finance minister and prime minister directly. Instead of making waves, you thanked the federal government for what they have done. You have shaken their hand and let them go on their way and then you've turned around to our own people, held up the empty cupboard and rung your hands, saying: If only we could have done more. Here is some spare change to tide you over.

In the hours after the budget, the Premier finally acknowledged the need to talk to the federal Finance minister about the unmet promise of more health funding – after the budget. Days late, months late; in fact, seven years late. That is how long we have been waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of transfer payment reform. They owe us a debt more than seven times greater than it was when they promised to fix it.

There are lots of options that we have put forward, including a rebate on home renovations or a rebate or reductions on fuel prices. The fact that the home renovations – the cost of that alone is not affordable for people who really need it.

Politics should be about telling people you have heard them and responded when, in fact, you've ignored them. Politics is gaslighting people by telling them they are better off than they perceive and they ought to be grateful. Politics is whitewashing the problem instead of addressing it.

Leadership is listening to people and hearing what they're facing. As inconvenient a truth as it might be, leadership is developing solutions that meet the end and the need. Leadership is putting the spin and the rhetoric aside and letting the outcomes of your actions do the talking. We are not seeing leadership from the other side in the face of a crisis that needs addressing.

You cannot fix a problem when you pretend it wasn't dealt with or it's been dealt with. The people have been unable to get their message through to their government loud and clear. They need a megaphone. My colleagues and I will be that megaphone. The words you hear from me speaking right now are the people's, amplified and delivered in the people's House – the one place the government is required to sit and listen. Heckle if you want, but this megaphone is not going to turn the volume down.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** All of this is challenging the voice of the people that all of us are sent here to represent. We are also speaking for a great many of the people that you were sent here to represent because you have chosen not to be their voice. You are your own voice.

People are sick and tired of their government telling them what they need. It's time for the government to hear the people say what they need. People are not only desperate to be heard. They're also savvy. When you say you are doing all you can, the people are too savvy to buy it.

They are hearing what others are suggesting. They understand the options you are rejecting. They are demanding better. The minister ended her Budget Speech saying: "Our focus is always on the relentless pursuit of better." Then I challenge the minister to live up to her words and put aside her inadequate plan in exchange for something better.

How should the government lead in a time of crisis? Ironically, the answer is captured in the very word that the minister used to start her speech: resilience. Resilience is all about the ability to adapt. People's circumstances have changed. The people's government must adapt accordingly. The way a government adapts is by



listening, not by heckling, not by shooting the messenger, not by trying to silence the megaphone but by truly listening.

And when you let people's words wash over you and let it really sink in how much people are hurting, then and only then you can adapt your policies to truly meet the need. Adapt, show flexibility in your approach and bend your response to meet the actual need of the people you have been elected to serve. It all comes down to the service to the people who put us here.

Leadership in a democracy is never about telling people how it's going to be. True leadership is not about what comes out of the mouth, but what goes into the ears. So start listening, start adapting and then, maybe, we'll start meeting the need.

Let's not wait until 2023, people are hurting right now and the time for adapting your approach to meet people's needs is now. The ball is in your court.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'll just take an hour or so now.

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

**S. CROCKER:** No, Mr. Speaker, I commend the Member opposite for his speech this afternoon, even though I'm certain we don't agree on most of it, but in all fairness, good job, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that this House do now adjourn.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House do stand adjourned.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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