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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's great to stand, again, and speak to the budget-related motions that we've discussed over the last few days. It's always a pleasure to stand on behalf of the residents of Topsail - Paradise. I've had the opportunity to speak to why we're not supporting the budget, although many will say well, you're not supporting this and you're not supporting that and you're not supporting this, but that's not the issue. As I've said many times before, it's what the budget could have been doing and hasn't done.

So I'm going to focus on a couple of the issues that I haven't already spoken about as to why this budget could be doing something better. I'd like to speak to something that's specific to residents of Topsail - Paradise and that is around the lack of a high school in Paradise.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure earlier today sang out, when he was up debating, and said: Would you support the budget if there was high school in Paradise? I mean, it's a bit of mute point because it's not in the budget, but it's one thing I would like to see in the budget, no doubt about it.

The previous PC government, back in 2015, in the budget at that time, had budgeted to create and develop or construct an intermediate school in Paradise and also budgeted money towards starting the

planning process for a high school in Paradise.

When this Liberal government came in in –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: No, Coley's Point, wonderful. They were on the list.

So when this current government came in power in late 2015, we saw the intermediate school deferred two years and we saw the high school deferred indefinitely. I've reached out to a number of individuals, chatting on this high school, especially last budget when another school was announced for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, which, again, no concern about anyone getting a school, Coley's Point, Portugal Cove- St. Philip's, no concern. The concern that I have and the residents of Topsail - Paradise have is that some of these announcements came out of the blue.

The high school for Paradise has been top of the list, or near the top of the list, for many years, for many years now. So I've spoken with the past CEO of the English School District and the current acting CEO and both, are miffed – that's my word now, I can't recall the word they used – in terms of why we don't have a high school in Paradise and why some other announcements were made because the data still support this.

We've heard the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills talk about the –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: Yes, he is – who has seen an increase in students and immigration.

We heard the Premier today talk about how they value education in this province and the Education Minister said something similar around education. So when we look at a high school in the area, it's not just

Paradise that benefits because a substantial number of Paradise children are bused either to Holy Spirit in CBS – actually in my district, the school is just across the street but it's my catchment zone – or Mount Pearl Senior High.

The complaint we've seen or heard is that when you have multiple K-to-6 or K-to-5 schools feeding into the three intermediate now and then they feed into only two high schools, then you can see what's happening. The class sizes are increasing dramatically. You jump from an intermediate high school population or class size of about 25 students to close to 35 in high school. So by having this high school in Paradise, it takes lots of pressure off the adjacent high schools, it creates a better teacher-student ratio with reduced class sizes, better education of what we all value and it increases the opportunity for more kids to participate in extracurricular activities.

So when we talk about the budget and, I know, I've said there are things in this budget that I've pushed for and that are in the budget and I applauded that; I applauded that Budget Day. But it's what's not in the budget. I've talked about long-term care and I've talked about early childhood education, mental health supports and all that.

So today I'm just focusing on one of them. It's the high school. There is no allotment for a high school or even the planning to start preparing for a high school in Paradise. That's going to have to happen sooner rather than later. Again, we see the increase in students in schools. The District of Topsail - Paradise has many, many young families. I know that because of all the calls I'm getting regarding child care. There are so many kids going to come up through this system, then the Galway development, Southlands development, other developments, as they take off, you're going to see more and more families. We also see an influx of more families coming into the Avalon.

So the data's been there, the figures have been there, the forecast has been there, the English School District had it as one of its top capital projects for at least eight years now, or maybe more, and we don't see it in the budget; we don't see any mention of it.

Now, I did reach out to the minister to meet in October. I wrote him again in February. We still haven't seemed to find time for that meeting. I'm still waiting to hear on that. I will give some applause to or kudos to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. We were able to have a meeting about three or four weeks ago. He realizes the need because he actually resides in Paradise.

So I don't see anything happening in this budget. I don't see it there. It's not there. It's something that we've got to start looking at right away. You know, kids are growing up. Kids have got to go to school. Some schools are getting older. It would certainly reduce the busing and there are the intangibles that come out of this. There's a greater sense of community when you have children who can go to school from K to 12 in their community. The intangibles of that are immense and you can't even put a price on it.

That is one of the main reasons or list of reasons as to why I can't support this budget. Even though, as I say, you can play back the tapes, I applauded two or three of the issues that are in the budget. I agree with them. I'm not up here arguing that this is no good, this is no good or this is no good. Not at all. I'm up here arguing for those who I represent as Topsail - Paradise MHA and, as well, the shadow critic or shadow minister for Health. I want to see more in the budget that addresses some of these issues, and that's where I don't have a faith in the budget currently.

At a different time, maybe it would be a good budget but right now, given the gaps from my point of view that are missing there, I can't support the budget. I'd love to see a

high school in there. I'd love to see a bigger program for continuous glucose monitoring devices. I'd love to see a greater impact in terms of our nurse practitioners. I'd like to see more definitive actions on seniors in long-term care.

I'd like to see some more definitive actions on long-term continuity of care when it comes to mental health. There are many items in the budget that is not there and, as an Opposition, we have to demand and debate and push and lobby and advocate to the best of our abilities to ensure that those we represent are going to get the maximum back on their tax dollars because that's what they pay taxes for: to ensure that the services are provided to those who need it. Right now there are areas in the budget where we're still lacking. We're still lacking in some areas.

I'll move away from the school; I think I've said as much as I can on that. I'll continue to present petitions. I applaud the schools that have gotten on the list. Education is certainly important. But I still see Paradise high school sitting on that list, near the top, and some action has to happen on that.

One other thing that I mentioned – I already talked to it – is long-term care. I've asked questions recently in the House around some of the programs or plans that were announced in the Health Accord that deal with seniors. Seniors need to be treated with dignity, respect and have some autonomy. They don't have the time we have. Many of our seniors are in their golden years. I've said it before, we've managed to get some couples together. We managed to get some in the same room or in the same facility. Again, with the help of many including the minister and his staff, we've been able to do that.

But some of the action items in the Health Accord are very specific in what we should be doing. We're a year into that Health Accord and yes, it might be a 10-year list of recommendations, but they're short-term,

medium-term and long-term issues there, recommendations or calls to action as they are in the accord.

We know it's not carved in stone that government is going to look at every one in that. We heard it here last year when we kept asking about this. We were told, well, it's a list of recommendations. We don't know what we're going to follow and what we're not. I can appreciate that. But a lot of expert work by so many people has gone into that document, as well as the Premier's economic report and many other reports. I've heard, personally from many groups in health care – because I try to meet with them on a regular basis and hear right from them. They are the ones who present the solutions to me. They're the ones who bring in the issues and suggest how we can solve them. I move them along and hope that someone is listening.

Again, I go back to the budget, yeah, in some of those instances it has happened. There are items in the budget that I applaud. But that still doesn't eliminate the issues that are not there, and those are the issues we are going to debate and push for. We know the budget is going to pass, but this is our opportunity as an Opposition to hold government accountable and to bring these issues forward and put them on the radar and hopefully they'll be looked at, either now or sometime in the near future.

But again I'll go back to the seniors, the long-term care. It is amazing, some of the stories I've heard. We all have parents who are elderly, if we're lucky. Some may even have grandparents here in this hon. House. You want to see them live out their final years as good as they can, to be in a dignified manner.

I was out to visit one of the homes in my district. I have three senior complexes in my district and this was a new one that opened up. Last week during the break, I tried to get out to different businesses or different agencies and I visited this new one in

Paradise. I went in and I had a game of corn hole, I guess is what you'd call it, tossing the bags. I had a great bit of fun. I will say I dropped the first shot in, just for the record.

There was a gentleman there who was playing who was 87. No lie, I thought he was about 60-odd because he was just in great shape. He goes on the treadmill; he plays everything he can throughout the day. That's the kind of environment we want to make affordable to our seniors and take some of the anxiety and stress off those who care for them. That's what we want to see.

It's interesting when you walk through these – and I'm sure we've all experienced it. Believe it or not, the seniors all know who you are. You may have never met them before. I had the opportunity; I sat with this couple and it was amazing. I'm terrible with names; I admit that, but these two seniors, one was 96 and one was 97. Now they had their walkers. They were sat out by the windows across from each other. Both of their spouses had passed and they were together. The gentleman kept saying he found his new love. The lady was kind of, well, we're just friends, you know. Ninety-six and 97, now think about. He was as proud as anyone to have this good friend. He told a story, he said yes, we're here and there a couple of weeks ago they were out sat in the sunroom holding hands, sat down holding hands and they both fell asleep holding hands.

Isn't that what our seniors deserve? Isn't that what they need for all that they've done for us, for our communities and to raise such fine people here in the House of Assembly? I mean that sincerely.

Just to hear that story, it's just amazing, 96 and 97 years old and to have these facilities that they can go to and live out their golden years together, the stress that it takes off family members, you think about mental health. I'm telling you, there are families out there who cannot afford the dollars for

support and then they have to try and look after their aging parents.

I had a couple – well, actually the daughter was here in Paradise and the three brothers were from away, she was taking care of her parents. Again, I look at the budget, yes, there are some things in there. But, yes, there are things that have to be pushed along. The provincial frailty plan that was asked for, these are things we need to have in place.

We look at other provinces, and again it was mentioned, the Health Accord talks about legislation to ensure the policies and regulations to ensure our seniors are treated the best they can. Because I'm telling you, when you have a loved one who looked after you for so many years, who's in a dire need, who may be in tears because they have to leave their house and go somewhere else or they don't understand what's happening around them, that's truly heartbreaking. That's truly heartbreaking for many families out there. You can't just abandon them. You have to find a place where they can go and you are totally at ease that they are being looked after. We have a lot of excellent staff out in our long-term care facilities, excellent staff. But do we have enough? No.

I agree our health care is in crisis and we really need to do more to ensure that the programs and services are there to address the needs of our Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across this great province.

Again, the Health Accord called for a comprehensive HR recruitment plan for health care workers. Yes, there's been this done, this done, this done, this done, I call it piecemeal, but to address this, you really need to sit down, you really need to iron out a plan with an end point, with targets, with timelines, with evaluation and what needs to be done to address the specific issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to get up in this hon. House again to be able to represent the District of Ferryland. I thank the people there for putting me here, to be able to do that. Again, I always like to make that statement when I get up to speak.

I'm going to start off on more of a positive note on this section of it. I know I'll get into other stuff, but, yes, Minister, it's coming for you, don't worry, I'm coming at you.

There's a lot of tourism stuff that goes on in my district and I'd like to touch on that. I'll start off by saying, if I miss one, I'm sorry, but I'll try to touch as many as I can. I'll just try to go through each community. I'm sure I'm going to forget one, but if I do I certainly apologize before I start.

I'll start off down in the Town of Petty Harbour. They have an aquarium down there that's well attended during the summer, a very popular spot to go. Also, they have zip lines down in Petty Harbour. If you haven't done that – I know there's one out in Corner Brook as well – it's a great zip line. I did that probably two years ago and it was a great adventure to go do it. I think there are 10 different rides there, you get a bus ride to one section and a bus picks you up when you finish on the other section. It's a great spot to go.

Also, there's another industry down there that's called Fishing for Success. I'll be doing a Member's statement next week on that. But there's an opportunity to take people out in a boat. They show you how to fillet fish. They show you how to cut out tongues and they show you some different stuff that they can do. It's a lady and her partner that do that. It's been a great success as well; a lot of people taking advantage of that.

Also, moving my way up, I'm going to try to move up the shore, as I do it, I'm going to say in Bay Bulls we have the boat tour industry, as well. That's two big, major boat tours there. I think there's one in Petty Harbour as well. But I know as I look at them every day when I drive or leave the community, you see these every day when you're leaving or around your community how many people are going through the community. I mean, these boat tours in Bay Bulls alone – I know, I see it so I can speak to that one a little bit easier – both of these have three to four runs a day that take I'm going to say on the average of 70 to 75 people per trip.

Now, I think the tour starts in the first week of May it opens. Generally when school is out that's when it gets busy. They're a little bit busy before that, but generally when the summer hits they're extremely busy. Last year was a pretty good year compared to the two previous years when we dealt with COVID. I certainly can't speak for financials for them, but it was pretty busy in the area for sure.

Also, when you work your way up you've got the bird sanctuary in Witless Bay as well, which the boat tours operates out of Bay Bulls and goes to that. In Ferryland and Cape Broyle there's kayaking.

When the Member for Paradise was speaking that time about corn hole, I know there's a couple of communities in Cape Broyle and Calvert that have a corn hole for seniors – I'm going to say we'll call them juniors – seniors and youth. They have a great bit of fun at that and it's a great sport that everybody can get out and play no matter what age group. As he said, there are some that are 80 and 90 years old. There was only a gentleman last week that was up, he couldn't go to a party because he was going to corn hole. He was 88 years old going to corn hole, so he didn't want to miss that.

Also, going further up, the dig in Ferryland; you've got lighthouse picnics. I know that some of the Members on the other side and other people here have said that they attended those and they are great. There are great artifacts in the dig in Ferryland. It's unbelievable to go up and watch how they can get down there with a toothbrush and dig this stuff out and find rings. There are 200,000 articles that are in the dig in Ferryland in the building that they've got there. You can go in there and visit that. It's incredible, the amount of stuff that they're after getting and finding in that dig.

Then you get there, there's another operation up there that they've got, the lighthouse picnics. I did that a couple of years ago – I don't know if it was last year or the year before, I did that. You walk to the lighthouse or if you can't get there, there's a gentleman who has a Side By Side and I think takes you out for \$5. You go out and you have your lunch all prepared. You order your lunch, you go out and you have a blanket and a picnic and you sit down at the lighthouse. This is about a 20 or 25 minute walk probably; maybe a half hour at the most. But it's a great adventure if anyone is interested and it's certainly something that's great for the area and draws a lot of tourism. Along with the iceberg again that's in Ferryland right now, with the number of people that travel to that community just to see that. It's a big attraction, ice bergs are for sure.

Also, when you get up to Portugal Cove South, you've got your UNESCO site, Mistaken Point is out there. I did that a couple of years ago as well. So some of these places I've got to get back and revisit again. But every time I'm up in Portugal Cove South, I normally stop into the building and see how the traffic is going in the middle of the summer, if they have a lot of tourists going there. So it's always something I'll check.

In Trepassey, the Trepassey Inn is there. Also, in St. Shott's, they have a new spot

that was opened last year. It's called Keeper's Kitchen, which is a place you go up and get a meal and sit down to some entertainment and there are four or five rooms that you can rent. It's a beautiful spot, I have to say.

Also, I'd like to bring up minor hockey that was just finished here in April across the province. How, for all our districts, I'm going to say that not every arena hosted a tournament but I'm going to tell you what these minor hockey groups bring to your communities is unbelievable. The amount of revenue that they generate for a community is incredible. Along with hotels and restaurants, it's incredible. It's probably one of our biggest economic things here in the month of April, there's no question about it. I mean, the restaurants are full. The hotels are full.

I was over in Deer Lake and I went to watch a minor hockey game in Corner Brook. It was incredible and all these teams are leaving when they're finished and they're going to get something to eat. That's two or three times a day when they're on the road. So it's amazing how much minor hockey puts into our economy. It is incredible.

I'll also touch on school sports. Again, you run out of time. You're trying to do a Member's statements and you're trying to congratulate every team that's in your school between the Goulds, St. Kevin's, Witless Bay, Mobile, Baltimore, Trepassey, all these areas have schools and they're all in provincial basketball tournaments and ball hockey tournaments. We're after having a lot of championships over this year, through this year, between basketball and ball hockey and still some ball hockey on the go, but again, the same thing, these schools bring a lot of revenue into a lot of restaurants in a lot of communities across the Island in basketball, volleyball and all that stuff. So it's a real big generator for sure.

I'd also like to say that they are working on an ATV trail up in the district as well. Hopefully when we get some approval on that, they will be able to finish the trail. It's important to join that link from the Goulds to Bay Bulls. I know that some of the people in our area take their bikes and move to Cape Broyle. From Cape Broyle up, it's done, but we're trying to join it, if we'd be able to do it. Hopefully that will happen and something that we'll be able to see in the summer because it's a big revenue generator as well for the area for sure.

Again, Airbnbs are pretty busy in our area, too, right along the District of Ferryland. It is bringing people into the community and with revenue it's really important to see that stuff.

Now, I will get on to the minister when we're talking about roads. Today we had a big announcement of \$306 million. The Gushue Highway wasn't mentioned in – well, it was mentioned. Yes, we're going to look at that later on in the Gushue Highway. But it's over there that long now that you're soon going to need brush cutting it's that long since they touched it. It's five or six years since they done anything with it and they haven't touched it in that length of time – haven't touched it. So they have a bridge over the road. They've got a bridge going over Topsail Road to get over to Brookfield Road and have not touched it in four or five years; haven't looked at it.

So I'm getting a few calls lately. It was mentioned last week in the news: stay tuned. I don't know what station they're on, but I didn't hear the announcement today. I was certainly expecting that to be an announcement today. They didn't touch it. Now they're going to look further. Again, maybe when it comes out, it will be brush cutting on the Gushue Highway and it's not even started yet. The limbs are coming up through it.

Also, I would like to say when you're going across the Island and looking at some of the road signs, the road signs are very

important and I brought this up before. It has nothing to do with the minister, really. Some of them need to be replaced. This is a big tourist attraction in this area. If you go to Florida, you see all the signs up above the road, all metal signs. In the road signs that we've got here – and they did some of them last year – some of them need to be replaced. When you're driving down here, coming on the Outer Ring and coming down here, the sign is rotten and fell down on the side of the post that it's supposed to be on. I know that you can't get them all the one time, but it's very discouraging to look at that and I've got to say that every time I'm driving from Bay Bulls to come out here, I look at the road signs.

One of the other annoying things that I see – and it has nothing to do with the minister; maybe it's to do with enforcement and police officers or whatever the case may be, but the writings that are on our concrete walls and all the buildings that people own or the infrastructure that we've got, it looks so bad when you drive along and see all the paintings that are on it. Even our signs – I don't know how we fix it but it is so discouraging when you look at all the signs. Hopefully you can fix them, Minister. That's what I'm hoping. That's why I'm bringing it up, just to remind you – and I'll say Gushue Highway, again, anyway, I remind you of that.

Also, in the district, I did have a call and we did speak to the minister's office in regard to road signs in the community. I'm going to say, one of the most popular signs that I see in the communities are the speed zone signs that go in where there are schools. They are very important, I've got to say. We have one in Bay Bulls, there's one in Mobile and there are some along the way. But I think, in some of these communities – and I know I've asked the department and I will compliment the person that takes care of our Department of Highways up our way, the superintendent. He does a great job. You can call him at any time. He answers you back and we go visit a site and I've got

to say he does a good job. So I congratulate him. I thank him for that because it's important when someone calls you about a ditch blocked up and it's on the department's infrastructure list, then it's nice to get it done. If you can get someone there within a week, that's certainly important.

I'll get into winter hours versus summer hours in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Every year, I look at it. When the summertime comes, we have time now to get some maintenance done when there's no snow clearing, obviously, no plow operators, but we do need to get our maintenance done. We haven't been doing it up to the grade that I think we should be doing it. Every district here is affected by that, I would say.

Now, when you're in St. John's, Mount Pearl, they're their own stuff, but outside in the rural areas, some of these places definitely need to have summer hours and people available in the summer hours to do the maintenance, the sides of the roads, the ditching and the brush cutting. Now, I did speak to the minister last year regarding brush cutting. It's something that he probably contracts out, whatever you have to do because you don't have that many people. In order to do ditching in a rural area, you need five people. You need somebody on the backhoe, you need somebody driving the truck, you need two sign people and the superintendent or the boss is going to be there. You need five people.

We are now in summer hours and we laid people off for the summer. I don't see why we can't keep these people on to do some maintenance. Get some of the maintenance done, some of the stuff will go away. I just think that's something that I'll throw out there. You're always saying well give us some answers. I'm trying to throw suggestions. Hopefully you're hearing them and listening to them and it's something that can be done.

As much as you didn't touch on it in the budget, I think we got one paragraph on the fishery – well, I will touch on it a little bit. I think there were four lines or five lines in the budget on fishery; it wasn't a whole lot, very little. Do you know what? This is what we were born and bred on here in the start of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is something that we should be still bringing high to our priority list here. I tormented the minister last year when I said just as well he is the minister of trout for what we do in fishery. We have no control over the fishery whatsoever.

AN HON. MEMBER: The minister of trout.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Minister of trout or could be minister of moose. It's not minister of fisheries, because the federal government gives out the quotas. We haul in the revenue and we claim to have a \$1.5 billion revenue from crab fishing. What did we do to get it in the province? We gave it all away so the federal government can tell us what to do with it. That's basically what happened. A lot of our mining and all that stuff seems to go to the federal government. They tell us what to do and we just said we're sick of them telling us what to do. We have to get control of our fishery here and we don't have it. It's time for us to get it back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Team Gushue was announced today.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It was announced? Yeah, it was announced – there's no funding announced for that, thank you very much. You're going to look into it. That's not what I read.

Anyway, we're going to get into –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: While we're on the fishing, I'm going to get into the processing licence. Last year we asked about it. Well, everybody can't have a processing licence, and I agree with that. Everybody can't have one. But we have people and places that are looking for processing licences. They say no, they can't have them. You can give them out and if they don't use them, then do you know what? You can take them back. If you're going to give out a processing licence to a company, then don't let them sell it to somebody else so they have the whole market. Take it back if they're not going to do the processing and give it to somebody else how will.

They said we're not going to have enough workers. Well, let them worry about that. When they're going out the licences, let that company, whoever wants it – not whoever wants; there's a limited amount. But if you're not going to be able to get workers, let them figure that out. If they want a processing licence and they're applying for it and they fit the qualifications, then give it to them but don't let them, in five years' time, take and sell it to all the big guys and they are going to have all control of everything. That's not what we want. We want to be to be able to haul it back and be able to give it to somebody or a community that could use it.

I know that there's a place in Petty Harbour had asked for it and there was another one out in St. Mary's and they wouldn't do it. We don't know if you have enough people; let them worry about that. We have to give out the licences so that people, whenever they do go fishing, that they won't be on trip limits, that they can be able to process the crab, and that's not happening.

Again, the federal government will be able to tell you when you go out and what day you're going out. If it's a big windstorm or a big wind a day like today, you're not going out. So now your next appointment is next week. It's like going to a doctor. You can't even get an appointment for that, to get out there, and that's what could happen. You

could be scheduled to go out today, you have a pile of wind and you can't go out there, now they have to wait for another week or two. It's not acceptable for us to be getting into that.

I get worked up about that because it's something that's in my community and the communities right along the Southern Shore, it's a big industry. I'm not saying I have the answers but no one has ever asked any of us over here about our answers or how we could solve it. The big word when I started in here in 2019 was "collaboration." I think I learned what the meaning of the word was, but it doesn't ever happen: collaboration. I haven't seen it – I haven't seen it.

I'll go back to when we started in 2019 and we had a minority government. This is where trust comes in and you're going to do stuff. When we had a minority government in 2019, we had a Privacy Commissioner that was going to be hired. There were four independent people and ranked them one to four. I think there were four people up for the job and I don't even remember if it was four.

But the Liberal government, at that time, wanted to hire the second-ranked person that came in. But because it was a minority government, you didn't get to do that. Everybody over here – the first person who was ranked is the fellow that's hired there now, the Privacy Commissioner. He was ranked number one. We were the ones that said that we wanted him. The Liberal government said they weren't going to hire him but because we had the number of votes to do it, they all had to agree and everybody voted for it and that's how it went down. That's what happened at that point in time.

I think a minority government worked very good in that occasion and it could work a lot better, but that's the way it is, we're going to live with that now. So that's the way it goes.

I will touch on the heat pumps. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I will say that hopefully when you get your opportunity that you'll get up for 20 minutes and be able to explain to the people how the heat pumps work, the procedure that goes through. I'd love to hear that because we answer the questions obviously. So do you guys, no doubt about it. Everybody gets questions on how this works.

I had a person in my district and they helped. They did take care of her, I will say that, and I'll explain it. They're 80 years old and they don't live in a Local Service District; they're not in a community. They live in, I'm going to say, it's a cabin roads, but they're living there full-time. So she doesn't pay property tax where she's to. She pays taxes obviously, but not a property tax.

She wanted to get a mini split or a heat pump in the house. So when they came back, they had to do two inspections. I think it rounds up to about \$850 or \$800 in that area. When they finally came up to do the evaluation and what she could get and what they could do and two people came up, it cost her \$800. She called and said I can't pay \$800. So here's a senior – we're in here talking about the budget and this is some of the reasons why we can't vote for it – two of them are in their 80s. She couldn't afford to pay but they did agree that they would add it to what the heat pump cost and they'll put it in to what she's paying. But she couldn't come up with that \$800.

So when you're saying that there's money out there and the seniors, this is what they run into. She could not come up with that \$800 so they added it in and split it out over what she got to pay for this heat pump and she was really happy that she got it, and I thank you for that. I had asked them about it, it got done and that's the agreement they made. So something worked out for her and she had given up on the idea. I'm glad that that happened for her, and she really needed it. She was on oil. She said she

wanted to get off the oil. It's just something that she wanted to do and it did get done. I do thank the minister for that.

So hopefully when you get your 20 minutes and you'll be able to get up and give us a real nice explanation on how that works, we'll be so delighted over here. We'll get a better understanding as well of how it all works. But what the procedure is – and I will just go back a little bit here. I had somebody that called me and I'm trying to find it now. It's to deal with oil tanks.

Right now an insurance company around here, the oil tanks will be covered under insurance companies for 15 years but they have a 25-year lifetime on the oil tank, but the insurance will only cover them for 15 years. So somewhere along the way you've got to meet with these groups, whether it be 15 years that they're good for or the insurance company got to move them to 25 years to be both coinciding. No good of having the insurance cover it for 15 years. You've got to replace it. No matter if there's a 25-year warranty on the tank, you've still got to replace it after 15 years because the insurance is not covering it. So one is not right, whatever that may be.

They are some of the things that you come in here and that is simple stuff that we can fix with communication. I'm sure that the ministers over there are listening and we certainly have these conversations. There are little things that we can fix to make our life easier. Little tiny things that we can do and instead of trying to go for the great, big, easy hanging fruits, let's get some of the small stuff out of the way to make stuff easier for us. It makes our job – I'm not going to say it's going to make it easier, but it will make it easier to do. It's certainly not going to make it easier.

Again, I'm running out of time. Thank you so much and I do appreciate the chance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Speaker, first of all, I'm going to speak this afternoon for the next 20 minutes about a couple of things. I'd like to focus on the theme of taxes. I think that seems to be the theme of the day, especially where we have been previously debating the carbon tax provisions that are under the bill that is being debated today. I also want to preface that, first of all, with a response.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure had in his speech debate indicated some of the concerns that I had raised in my last speech on the debate. I think that's the beauty of having debate, first of all, is that we have this opportunity to respond. When I had my speech last week and made some comments, he then responded and now it's my chance to have a say. He basically had indicated that he was concerned that I was saying that he wasn't listening.

Speaker, I'll be the first to say when I see some ministers in the government listening to the people, the first one that comes to my mind was recently when the fisherpeople were in to the House of Assembly and the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture took the opportunity to go out and speak with the people on the steps of the Confederation Building. It was a very emotional, a very tense gathering. But when you hear and when you see someone listen like the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture on that particular day, that takes courage and that needs to be acknowledged and commended.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Another example of a minister that's listening is the Minister of Health and Community Services. I'll just give the most recent example where

this minister went out to attend a town hall at Memorial University of Newfoundland and spoke to the university students at a town hall, which of course is open, fair game. The questions can be quite challenging and you do not know what questions are coming at you. It can be a difficult experience because you're not sure of what you're going to be asked.

So when a minister does that, with a very busy schedule, takes the time to go out and listen to the people, that should be acknowledged and commended as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I want to say for the record, Speaker, that this is what's so important about debate because you have the opportunity in a democracy to commend government when they are making and doing things that further our democracy. I think those are two examples that come to my mind right away where it shows that the government has the opportunity and has the potential to listen.

That, however, brings me to *Budget 2023*. I have some concerns about that aspect of listening, Speaker, because when we look at the *Budget 2023*, we do see that there are some good things in the budget. There's no debating that, but the overall problem that I have with this budget – there are many issues. I referenced the main concern that I had last time I spoke, which was with respect to seniors and how seniors are not being listened to. I think that's what the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was saying that he listens to seniors and that he didn't want me to be telling him that he doesn't listen to seniors. But the thing is, the seniors do not feel that they're being listened to, Speaker. That is the problem.

As well, when we look at the Seniors' Advocate. The Seniors' Advocate in her report was very clear. This was an excellent report that had a huge sample size from seniors throughout the Province of

Newfoundland and Labrador. They had the opportunity to show and to demonstrate where they felt their needs were not being met. So there was an opportunity there by the government to listen and to act on the Seniors' Advocate's report and they did not do that. Those are the words of the Seniors' Advocate who said that they did not, in essence, respond and did not address the concerns that needed to be addressed in the seniors' report. So I have a serious concern with that.

As well, when I look at the taxes that are in place, Speaker, I have such concerns about how people in Newfoundland and Labrador are essentially taxed to death. We do know that when we have tax hikes that this is a windfall. It's a windfall for the Treasury, at whose expense? I would submit it's at the people's expense. Governments get additional revenue every time the price of gas rises, every time the price of gas goes up, additional revenue in HST; every time the cost of products go up we see the same thing, but what happens to people's bank accounts? They go down. So they get smaller, Speaker. High gas taxes affects everyone.

I must say when I look at taxes and the concept of taxes and when I look at the carbon tax, I am deeply, deeply troubled by that carbon tax. And let's be clear, it was supposed by this Liberal government. They are the ones who voted to make it happen. They allowed it to happen. They are the ones, Speaker, who, essentially, are forcing struggling families to bear yet another tax. It's an increase on fuels.

I would say that when it comes to a healthy democracy, we need to listen. We need to have a government that listens. In this case, I do not believe that the government is doing that.

Does government think that the people of our province supported the carbon tax? Well, they didn't – adamantly opposed. Speaker, when we look at the intent really of

the carbon tax, we know that, basically, the intent of the carbon tax was to – it was really, if you want to call it this – to curb behavior. It was to try to basically discourage people from depending upon fossil fuels, but the problem with that in Newfoundland and Labrador is it really is not viable.

Let's look at the green energy, the green agenda. All of us will agree that green energy, that's the future. It's important. There's no question about that and we will all agree that with respect to fossil fuel energy, it's going to be phased out, eventually, but right now fossil fuel energy, coal, oil, whatever, natural gas, it's still in existence. I think the latest stat that I heard, these types of energy produces approximately 80 per cent of our energy that's used in the world. So for now it's needed. It's a necessary evil, if you will. There is a demand.

But, Speaker, when we look at the government's intent behind carbon tax it is very concerning. We know there's that intent to get people to switch from gas to electric vehicles, but, Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador, many people are not in a position to be able to do that, to afford to be able to switch from gas to electric vehicles. So what are they doing with the high cost of gas and the high cost of fuel? Many people are simply probably having to park their cars or to carpool. They can't afford to drive.

So what I don't understand, Speaker, is why did government feel it necessary, even when they subsidized electric cars because we know in our reality here in Newfoundland, we're not in downtown Toronto or Montreal, so I think that having this kind of carbon tax even supported by the provincial government, which is, in essence, what they did. It's sad because our Premier, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, he had an opportunity here. He had an opportunity last year, if he had been really serious.

Now we hear that they're trying to distance themselves from the federal government. Well, I heard the Minister of Finance saying it was the federal government's decision. I think earlier when she introduced this she said it was the federal government's decision and basically there was an effort there to try to distance the provincial government from that decision.

That, Speaker, is hard to really take because that is not the reality. This provincial government did support the carbon tax and we all know it. The PCs, the Opposition were opposed to the carbon tax. We've never supported it. We've always been opposed to it. There's been no indecision. There's been no flip-flop. We've been totally opposed to the carbon tax.

The Premier of our province, he had the opportunity, he had the chance for his caucus, to lead his caucus, to take a strong stance against the federal Liberals. He could have made a difference, Speaker, he could have. Instead of basically speaking out and voting in favour of a carbon tax, he didn't. Is it any wonder that the Trudeau Liberals aren't taking his objections now very seriously? Because they questioned whether this is really legitimate.

So, Speaker, this is of concern when we look at the tax implications for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I asked this when we debated the carbon tax last year and I ask it again today when we're talking about taxes: Is the government aware that by having this carbon tax, it's affecting everyone in this province? These are real people that we all represent who are struggling, who are suffering and who feel that they're being ignored here.

These are people, many of whom probably can't afford to drive to work and they cannot afford to buy food. We see with the cost of living and the increases, but now they're going to have further taxes. They cannot drive to their medical appointments or even to the grocery store. This is a reality. This is

not something that I'm exaggerating on. I hear it from people in the District of Harbour Main.

We don't live in ivory towers in the District of Harbour Main. We know that there are difficult decisions being made by many people. Even today, the people that we represent who are basically being forced to consider their living arrangements. They're trying to explore about having opportunities to live closer to work and, sadly, they're probably looking at opportunities to leave this province to work.

So, Speaker, when I look at the theme that I'm talking about today, which is taxes, people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are feeling the brunt of the taxes that they have to bear. I just want to conclude in my last five minutes on what impact this is having on people mentally and emotionally. This is Mental Health Week and we must recognize that the cost of living and the taxes that people have to bear is contributing – and there's no doubt about this; we hear it every day in our constituency office, but it's contributing to stress. It's contributing to anxiety and mental health issues for many people.

I think what we need to do, and I believe it's incumbent upon government to do this, is to look at this urgency. An action must be taken with greater urgency to ensure that there's some type of financial relief to our seniors, for example, who the Seniors' Advocate has clearly delineated are having serious financial struggles right now and as well coping with the burden of this all. We must, where we talk about this is Mental Health Awareness Week, look at improving access to long-term mental health care.

It's not just about short-term care; it's long-term mental health care. We need to look at continuity of care. We need to ensure that there aren't just these short-term measures that exist for people that are struggling and trying to cope. But there must be more attention given to long-term plans. We know

that psychiatry, for example, the wait-list for psychiatrists I hear, we're not talking months; we're talking years – years. I mean we need to look at this with urgency to ensure that people don't have to wait those times.

The same thing for psychologists. We hear that the wait times and the fact that we don't have enough psychologists here is very disturbing. We need to see more measures implemented to improve access to long-term mental health care. That has to be a priority for us as well when we look at many of the pressures that people are feeling right now when it comes to having to deal with the tax burden that is imposed upon them.

I didn't even get into talking about the sugar tax, but my colleagues have all very effectively addressed the problems with the sugar tax and how the logic of the sugar tax is lost. It's lost on most of us.

When I determine whether to support a budget or not, I look at a number of factors, Speaker: Did the government listen? Well, to address the question or the point that the Minister of Transportation raised earlier, I still maintain that the government did not listen. They are still not listening when it comes to budget and the needs of the people of this province with respect to the budget. Is this the best that can be done? I ask that question and my answer is no. It is not the best that can be done to help the people of this province. Finally, does it inspire confidence and protect the vulnerable of our province? I would argue that is not happening here either. I believe that our vulnerable are being left behind.

Speaker, when we look at the fact that this is a \$9.8-billion budget, surely there could have been more money allocated for the more vulnerable, like our seniors in the province. We know that \$3.9 billion, I believe, went to health care. Surely, we can do more when it comes to mental health supports, for example, and have some long-term plan in place to address the needs of

the vulnerable who are suffering with respect to mental health challenges in our society.

I do believe it's important when we have a budget that there be fiscal restraint. I think that's important because government is minding the public purse. So the right policy decisions have to be made. However, I question many of those policy decisions by this government and where this \$9.8 billion has been allocated, in my view, is very misguided.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I am just going to briefly speak on the budget. I spoke earlier on the amendment and some other aspects of the budget. I don't have a whole lot left remaining to talk about so I'm not sure if I'll go to the full length of my 20 minutes.

Just looking at the budget now and the impacts from my district. One of the things that this government actually talks a lot about is implementation of the Health Accord and actually addressing health concerns for the province. A big part of the Health Accord has to do with the social determinants of health. The biggest problem I have with this budget is it really is not doing much to actually alleviate some of the gaps when it comes to my district having access to the social determinants of health such as housing, such as nutritional food, such as access to education.

This morning when we were looking at the upcoming Question Period, we were looking at asking questions on education. What questions would you like to ask, Lela? My problem with the way that this province deals with education in my district is that it

doesn't take into consideration the differences that actually impact my students based on their culture, their language, their geographic isolation and many other of the other factors.

Now, the Labrador School Board wasn't perfect, but at least it had a voice and it had the understanding of some of these issues. One provincial school board really, really is detrimental to my district and we're starting to see the impacts. In 2021, a decision was made, at the board level, to put all my students outside of their time zones on to the Newfoundland time zone. The biggest problem for that, with my students, was they would actually have to leave their in-class courses a half an hour early to actually go online. When they showed up back in their class, they were a half an hour late.

The biggest problem for this is the decision. This was a huge decision that the students had to live with for an entire year. So what happened? Our students were collateral damage for the convenience of, basically, having one time zone. Very little thought was given into it and, in actual fact, that whole group of students that were involved for that year suffered tremendously.

The next year, 2022, what happened? Another huge decision was made that really, really harmed my students in Northern Labrador. What it was, in actual fact, when students showed up –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. EVANS: Help me out here, Speaker.

When students actually showed up in September to do their courses, the high school students found out that all their core academic teachers were taken from them, taken out of the classroom, and they had to go online. The biggest problem with these two decisions that happened year after year was that our Internet is really, really low, painfully slow and it created a lot of hardships.

So that has to do with the quality of education, but it goes back to the social determinants of health. I worry that this type of decision-making is now going to be applied to our health care. We are already in a health care crisis in Northern Labrador and we have been in a health care crisis even before the pandemic. Even before the shortages of nurses and doctors that we see across Canada, we were in a health care crisis. Now they are actually switching us to one Provincial Health Authority. So, to me, I really, really worry about the future of the people in my district.

There are some positive things. I am going to own that. There are some positive things. There's a small 5 per cent increase to the Seniors' Benefit. So does that put pressure on me to vote in favour of this budget? There's a 5 per cent increase in income support, the Income Supplement. But 5 per cent increases for very, very low money is really not going to help my people be able to heat their homes, be able to feed themselves and their children, to be able to access education, to be able to travel.

When we look at this past summer, speaking about access to nutritional health foods, this summer in my district we're paying \$2.45 – actually, almost \$2.46 a litre. We were frozen all summer, creating hardship. People couldn't go out and hunt and fish. People were advertising for gas buddies to try to be able to go out and hunt and fish during the summer months to collect the food that they needed to have access to quality foods. This winter, all winter we were still froze at \$2.67 a litre. These are the highest rates we are paying.

But that's not my biggest concern. Access to food is important, but at the end of the day, our seniors, our elders in their houses can't afford to heat their house. You take a 900-litre tank outside your house and you fill it up. In actual fact, in my district, it's costing \$2,218 to fill up that tank. In actual fact, the households in my district are burning up to one full tank a month. Imagine your light bill

costing \$2,218 a month. Well, that's what the people would pay for the stove oil to heat their houses, a minimum between \$1,000 to \$2,000 to heat their house.

But, in actual fact, I don't think it's costing the people that much because they can't afford it. So what's happening is they're actually not having warm houses. That's really, really impacting our elders and it's really, really impacting our children. So for me with this budget, a 5 per cent increase for Income Supplement is not enough to make me vote for this budget. A 5 per cent increase in Seniors' Benefit is not enough.

I will acknowledge and I'm very much appreciative of the fact that the budget for our groomed trails has increased to the point where we might be able to pay our groomer operators a decent salary. It's not a full-time job; it's a seasonal job. But what we've been struggling with since I've got elected, AngajukKâks have been telling me there's not enough money to attract groomer operators to actually keep them employed in the winter months. So we're not actually being able to fill the positions.

The thing that they said to me was that our trails are our highway. Glen Sheppard, AngajukKâk from Postville, said that. Barry Andersen, AngajukKâk from Makkovik, said that. Joe Dicker, AngajukKâk from Nain, said it. Marjorie Flowers, AngajukKâk from Hopedale, said it. Charlotte Wolfrey, the former AngajukKâk from Rigolet, said it.

At the end of the day, we shouldn't be paying our groomer operators just a few cents above minimum wage. You can't attract reliable workers. You can't attract good operators that will actually be able to groom our highways, because our trails are our highways.

So for me, if anyone wants to try to say why did you vote against the budget, why did you vote against that 5 per cent increase and why did you vote against actually having a little bit of money to go towards our

groomer operators, at the end of the day, our people are not being able to have good quality of life because of all these things.

One of the things, it was actually this Liberal government in 2018 made the decision to take off that freight boat from the Island and we see the huge increases in food. And it's not just about the pandemic. Everything gets blamed on the pandemic, but at the end of the day, the extra trucking, not to my district, but to Goose Bay has really increased the cost of food. The cost of people needing boats, people needing snowmobiles so they can hunt and fish in the summer and in the winter. At the end of the day, all these increases have driven everything in my district and there's been no substantial relief.

Electricity, you try to heat your house with electric heat. After that 1,000 kilowatt hour life block, we go up to 19 cents a kilowatt hour. People can't afford – now even if people wanted to take advantage of the switching from oil to electric rebate, in my district they can't because of the requirements for them to switch over. It is really, really difficult to get anyone qualified to do that work in the district, just like the other rebates we've struggled with.

And another thing too, yes, I do appreciate that one-time \$500 payment and I do appreciate all the efforts that went into making sure that people in my district qualified for it. But a one-time payment of \$500 is basically just going to buy one drum of stove oil. It may take two to four drums in the winter to heat your house, a month. So, for me, it's not enough and, at the end of the day, we have to look at the social determinants of health. In actual fact, this budget fails my district when it comes to those.

So we can look at the Health Accord, but at the end of the day, we are struggling. Not only that, too, these changes, one Provincial Health Authority, is going to basically – I was going to use a flowery word, but it really

is going to tie us in to poor decisions, harmful decisions that are made from basically the Avalon Peninsula that's going to impact our quality of life, going to impact our overall health and basically our ability to survive.

For me, I'm not going to continue to go on. I can go on and on about our district but, at the end of the day, until things change and people start actually having the same access to services and infrastructure and also the social determinants of health, I'm not going to be able to support this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even though I have time left, I'm just going to stop right now and let everyone vote.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any other speakers?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I adjourn the debate on Motion 1 and then I will call from the Order Paper, Order 13, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 38)

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

T. WAKEHAM: It's always a pleasure to stand and represent the District of Stephenville - Port au Port and, again, we're talking about the significant impact on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the tax implications of the budget. This particular bill is increasing the limit on the payroll tax, which is a good thing because the payroll tax is a regressive tax. The more staff you hire, the more payroll tax you pay.

So to see the limit extended is a good thing, although I did notice that the actual revenue from payroll tax is actually going up this

year from \$135 million to \$139 million. Again, I suspect there's a good portion of that though that is simply in and out because the new regional health authority and previous regional health authorities pay payroll tax. So on the one hand, the government, it's included in the budget item for the department that gives it out to the health authorities and, on the other hand, they give it back. I am sure there are lots of other agencies, boards and commissions the same thing happens. Money goes into their budgets and then comes back to government in the form of payroll tax.

The other thing that was talked about by the minister, significantly, was the Physical Activity Tax Credit and the fact that the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, revenue from that will be used to pay for this particular program. It was also interesting to note in the Budget Speech that the revenue from the sugar-sweetened beverage tax was going from \$6 million to \$12 million. So that's a significant increase in revenue for a program that, if successful, was not supposed to collect any revenue. Because the whole purpose of this particular program was to Rethink Your Drink. The idea was that they would collect no revenue if it was really successful because people would've modified their behaviour.

As I have said in the past, the only thing being modified is the amount of money in somebody else's pocket, in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador's pockets. That's what's being modified every step of the way. Again, I'd ask the minister, do not Rethink Your Drink, rethink your tax, because right now it's hurting a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I like the idea of a Physical Activity Tax Credit; I really do. Anything we can do to promote physical activity in this province is a good thing. I question, though, whether or not this particular physical tax credit is getting to those who really need the money. Because if you think about it, you have to spend \$2,000. Now, for a lot of people

\$2,000 is a lot of money to spend on a program or to enrol your children in a particular sporting event or to buy them that equipment they need. In order to get the tax credit, you have to spend \$2,000 in order to get back a little over \$300.

The minister alluded to 29,000 people who filed income tax last year and took advantage of that tax credit, but I ask, what tax bracket were they in? Do we know or can we provide that information? Yes, the program, 29,000 families applied for the tax credit, but again I ask, what tax bracket were they in?

One of the other things we've talked about with this sugar tax was the idea that some of the money would go towards a pilot project for insulin pumps. My colleague here has been talking about that for more than two years, asking government to make that investment because it's been proven to save money at the end of the day in health care. I believe out of the \$12 million that's in this particular budget only around \$1 million has actually been allocated to this particular program. That's a far cry and it really needs to be looked at.

Those are some of the challenges that others have talked about with sugar tax that we continue to talk about and I believe the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am sure Members opposite have received countless emails with their concerns about the impact of the sugar tax. How it was rolled out, what it applies to and applies to and how they're continuing to have to pay this extra amount every time they go to the store. So it's time to say no to the sugar tax, no to Rethink Your Drink. Let's rethink the tax and move on and be done with it.

Now, this bill today talks about carbon tax. I've heard many federal ministers stand up and talk about carbon tax and how, as my colleague alluded to, they're not worried because you're going to get all this money back in revenue. So it begs the question, if we are going to get all of this rebates back

in carbon tax that you pay in and keep people whole, as some federal ministers have said, you have to ask the question why are we charging it in the first place?

When you think about the fact that the millions of dollars the federal government will spend collecting this tax and the millions of dollars they will spend to give it back to you, why are they charging it? Well, I would argue that what you will get back will not be what you've paid out in carbon tax, because every single time carbon tax is applied there's a 15 per cent surcharge. A 15 per cent surcharge that they charge you for spending your money. It's called HST and that money is not given back to you. That money will not come back to you.

Think about the over 40,000 families in Newfoundland and Labrador who heat their homes with oil. On July 1, they are going to have to pay an additional 17 cents a litre in carbon tax. That is an incredible amount of money, an incredible amount of taxation.

There was a government defeated one time, a long time ago, when they tried to increase gasoline tax by that, a federal government. Maybe it's time this federal government was defeated and bring on the next election for challenging and forcing people to pay 17 cents a litre on July 1 for a carbon tax increase. That is not fair to the people of this province, to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Many of whom, as I said, have homes that are run on fuel, that are run on oil. They do not have the financial resources to take advantage of many of the programs that are offered, especially when it comes to the conversion of your house from oil to electricity. There are some who are taking advantage of the program and that's great, but there are many who cannot afford the cost of upgrading the electrical portion of their homes and that is a significant problem.

Seventeen cents per litre as of July 1, that's on fuel. We also know, of course, that gas tax is going to go up as well. If there ever was a tax that was an injustice to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is the carbon tax. Because, again, the prime minister of the country brought in a carbon tax to help modify people's behaviour, to change how they get to and from work.

Think about that for a second. Tell the people in my district, tell the people in all of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, anybody that lives outside of the urban area: What options do you have? What options do you have if you want to go to a medical appointment? What options do you have if you want to drive your kid to school or to a hockey game or go to the grocery store to pick up your groceries? You have no option. Because other than spending a significant amount of money to go in a taxicab or to drive a car, you don't have that option of a bus, of a transport system or subways or any of that.

Newfoundland and Labrador is not a province that has a public transportation system. There is a portion of what I would call a public transportation system here in the urban part of the city, but, again, I think there are a lot of people in this region that still continue to use their own automobiles to get to and from work or to take their kids where they need to go. So it's not a tax that is fair to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would go on to argue that as a province, Newfoundland and Labrador has paid more than its fair share to make this country green. I say that because of two major projects, one is the Upper Churchill. The Upper Churchill is one of the biggest projects that was ever undertaken in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We all know the way the water flows, but we also know the way the revenue flows.

For years now, Quebec has been the beneficiary of the Upper Churchill. But it's a

green project that was green before we even talked about green. It's a project that the Province of Quebec has earned billions and billions of dollars from. Hopefully that will change soon and we will renegotiate an Upper Churchill contract that allows Newfoundland and Labrador to be the principle beneficiary of that resource. We don't mind sharing, but we need to be the principle beneficiary of our own resources. But that is a huge project for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Of course, we've all talked in this House about the cost of Muskrat Falls and the green project that it's supposed to be and will be at some point, but a project that was sanctioned by the federal government, a federal government that provided loan guarantees. A project that was not only going to help make Newfoundland and Labrador greener, but also help our sister Province of Nova Scotia by taking them off coal. A project that the Premier alluded to just a few short days ago as being a benefit to Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to attracting tourism potential and film development, such as Peter Pan and the other companies that he referred to like Netflix who see this place as a place to invest in because of our green economy, because of the fact that we are moving to that.

So when you put all those things together and think about the price that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have paid and continue to pay to help make this country green, I would argue that we should not be standing here talking about a carbon tax that's going to be imposed on our fuel, on our heating fuel come July 1; it is already imposed on our gasoline. That is a problem and I don't believe for one second that Newfoundland and Labrador should be paying that tax.

As a matter of fact, it's disappointing that the prime minister of the country doesn't see fit to take an equity stake in a project that will make Canada greener like Muskrat

Falls, but can turn around and spend \$30 billion on a pipeline out west. Now that tells you the respect that the prime minister has for Newfoundland and Labrador. Instead of taking an equity stake in this major project that will not only help make Newfoundland greener but will also help make Nova Scotia a greener place to live, they refused to take an equity stake. That's just not good enough, just not good enough and we should be doing better. We should demand more.

We should stand up and say no, it's just not right. We're going to keep arguing until that's done and stop this carbon tax and allow us to be ourselves and recognize the significant contribution, as I have said, that the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador are paying as a result of trying to help make Canada greener. We have so much more potential to even add to that and I look forward to that being developed.

I would also, though, like to point out in the Budget Speech and in the Schedule I of the Budget Speech under revenue and taxation. There's a particular line in here that bothers me a little bit because at the same time as all Members opposite are now telling us that this is not the time for carbon tax, carbon tax is not the right tax and we're going to vote against it in this piece of legislation. There is a line in here under revenue for the '23-'24 budget that says carbon tax. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is going to collect \$35 million in carbon tax revenue this year. That may be for the first quarter of the year, \$35 million budgeted under carbon tax.

So I would suggest to the Members opposite, if you truly believe what you say about carbon tax not being a good tax, carbon tax not being the right tax at this particular time, that that \$35 million be used towards improving the lives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who cannot afford to pay 17 cents a litre for carbon tax on their fuel starting on July 1, let's make a commitment that that \$35 million that's on

this line item for carbon tax in this Schedule that that will be given back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are going to have to pay an excessive amount for oil prices in the coming months and next year. That's where that needs to go, not simply being a budgeted line item, but knowing that at the end of the day it will be used to give back because if you truly believe that carbon tax is not the right tax, if you truly believe in what you are saying, then let's make sure that \$35 million gets allocated.

You know the prime minister's office, as I said, talked about: we're going to give you your money back. Yet, the PMO can say that and his ministers, but the PBO, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, will tell you that we're going to be worse off, that the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador by 2030, will be worse off than they are now. So I trust the Parliamentary Budget Officer when they provide that information that we will be worse off than we are now because of carbon tax.

That's why I will stand here every single opportunity I get and argue against the carbon tax. I will argue that that \$35 million, as a line item, we need the minister to stand up and say yes, that will be used and refunded back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The federal government are going to refund back their carbon tax according to what the prime minister and his ministers have said. Will the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador do the same thing? Will they refund back the \$35 million that's shown here in the budget? Because if you truly believe that carbon tax is not the right tax and this is not the right time for a carbon tax, then let's not take \$35 million out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who can least afford it. Let's find a way to give it back. Let's find a way to give that back to the people of this province. That's an easy decision.

So when they stand up to talk about the budget and they stand up to talk about

support for the budget, then stand up and talk about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and support – the federal government says they're giving the money back; the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has an opportunity to do the same thing. Give back the \$35 million that you're taking out of the people's pockets right now in the next three months. Give it back; \$35 million, give it back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that need it the most.

If you truly believe that this is the wrong tax and this is not the time for carbon tax, this is the time, though, to make the right decision and refund that back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): I'm now recognizing the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I don't know how many of you in this House at one time or another – I think back when gas prices were going through the roof many, many years ago, before Costco even, if we knew the price was going up on a Thursday night, we'd get into the lineup and try to beat the price increase. When Costco came, you'd see the lineups in there and people would line up. In addition, of course, you'd have to pay to get access to the pumps at Costco. You'd have to pay the membership fee to be a part of Costco.

Why do I start off with that? Because to save that two, three, four, five cents on that fill up that night, it meant that I had to leave the comfort of my own home, it meant that I had to line up and spend sometimes an hour or more of my time, just to wait to make that savings and if I was a member of Costco, of course, there was the membership fee and everything else that went with it, and the drive in there. So I

would argue, to have that saving at the pump, maybe it was about breaking even, or costing more in the long run.

I'll start off with this quote from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who says that: "The effects of climate change bit a \$20-billion hole of Canada's economy last year, parliamentary budget officer, Yves Giroux said Tuesday." That was back in November. That is how much climate change, he estimated, took out of the Canadian economy, \$20 billion.

So let's get it straight, it's already costing us, except it may not be as obvious as we think, but we're already paying for it.

He notes also that: "Over 1.5 C, the effects of climate change begin to mount exponentially." That the cost of climate change, extreme weather, you name it, by the time 2050 rolls around, just in time for my grandchildren are trying to get on their feet, it's 2.5 per cent, that's \$145 billion out of the economy; by 2100, \$165 billion. Those were estimates right now.

"The economic hits from climate change include reduced farm outputs ... lower productivity for outdoor workers and higher energy bills during hotter summers." One time in Newfoundland, imagine, you didn't really need an air conditioner. You do now.

The cost of becoming a more resilient country: So when we talk about the cost of the carbon tax, I guess – and by the way I haven't yet decided on how I'm going to vote on this – I think we're living in a fool's paradise if we're not looking at the economic cost and the hidden costs or the not-so-hidden costs of climate change on each and every one of our pocketbooks including seniors, including those who live in rural communities, including those who live in urban centres, including the thousands of people who showed up on our steps several years ago demanding that we take action on climate change.

We seem to ignore also in this, Speaker, the whole effect of corporate greed in terms of the oil companies and grocery chains in driving up prices and reduce it down to the carbon tax is going to create this havoc. It's already been created, but not necessarily by the carbon tax. Climate change will hurt. I can guarantee you, it will hurt people and it will affect health care. You just got to look at the Health Accord in Newfoundland and Labrador to see that. They've already identified that as a cause.

It will decimate rural Newfoundland and the most vulnerable, and our Northern communities are already suffering big time. It will decimate. You've just got to look at Port aux Basque and that's just the tip of it. It will decimate our rural communities. It will have, no doubt, an effect on our food production, transportation and insurance cuffs. It will drive up prices. It already has driven up insurance costs.

We're talking about fuel but it's already taken a bite out of our pocketbooks. If we go to spend on insurance for our home, we're paying an increase. Maybe not because of anything that happened here, but I can guarantee you the various wildfires, the loss of crops, you name it, in other parts of the world are having an effect on us here.

Now, it's interesting because one senior I know who lives in a small cottage, does not drive, heats her home with electric, received a notice from the federal government regarding the climate action incentive payment. So she's going to get, over the course of a year, starting in July, \$164 four times a year. That comes to \$656 for her. She doesn't drive, she doesn't heat her home with oil. I would assume that this will vary. So there's the payback right there because of the carbon tax. There is a payout, it's coming back. I'll carry on with this for a few minutes.

So the Parliamentary Budget Officer has highlighted the cost and the cost is going to go up. We're going to pay for it. Actually,

long after I'm gone, I guess my grandchildren are going to pay for it. Because I'm not only worried about seniors, I worry about my children and my grandchildren and what a world we're going to hand to them and what are they going to be able to afford? How are they going to live in it?

Now, no doubt, if we look at the politics of inevitability, that somehow I guess we have to believe that there will be a solution. That magically science will find a solution and we won't have to worry about it. But that rarely happens. So the hard work starts now for the future.

The question then becomes, why don't we have a public transit system? I've heard that lately in Newfoundland and Labrador: Why don't we have a public transit system? Why is it that we have no choice but to depend on cars and motor vehicles? It comes down to choices and choices we can still make. I would go back to look at the whole thing of Rails for Roads.

In making that decision, we committed ourselves to a highway system that has become in many ways unsustainable at points. We had coastal boats at one time. We had various forms of transportation, yet look at our city. Even St. John's, as an example, the urban sprawl, even in our design of cities, we make it so that it's impossible to cycle from place to place, to walk or to have public transit.

The Team Gushue Highway, who does it benefit? But again what we're going to be doing here is that we're making it easier and easier every time to use cars. We have made no option here for using public transit. That includes like the twinning of the highway, drive-throughs, you name it.

At some point, if we're serious about averting climate and we all say we're committed to the cause of making sure climate change doesn't have the worse effects, then somewhere along the line

we've got to start looking at how Newfoundland and Labradorians have access to public transit, not just in St. John's, but in the regional area of the Northeast Avalon, across the province and throughout because I will argue that there are many people, seniors I know, who do not—

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: Yes, Metrobus across the province. Let's call it province bus.

But there are many seniors in these communities who do not drive. That's going to become worse as more seniors get to the stage where they may not want to drive, but what are the alternatives for them? Except maybe an expensive taxi service.

So the fact is we can, if we start making the choices, look at in terms of what we're going to do, where we go forward. There are ways we can invest the money. But if you look at it, take a look at here, the Confederation Building, how much space, the footprint of this building compared to the footprint of the parking lot, any of our public buildings, we chose that over making public transit more affordable or more efficient and more accessible to everyone in this province.

It comes down to a choice because I do believe and my greatest fear is that at some point in the future, after I'm gone, that my children and their children will be paying a huge cost for our failure to act.

Now carbon tax itself, as of 2021, according to the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, as of 2021, 35 carbon tax programs have been implemented across the world. And guess what? They work.

Even the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the OECD continue to call for expanded use of carbon pricing. In BC — now BC doesn't have, maybe, the climate of Newfoundland and Labrador but give it a few more years, we might catch up. But six

years after the policy was implemented in British Columbia, fuel use was down by a whopping 16.1 per cent and economic growth kept pace.

Revenue neutrality is a key part of this. The government must, by law, in their carbon pricing, offset the carbon tax revenues through matching cuts to other taxes, so the whole notion of a tax shift. British Columbia actually ended up cutting \$760 million more in income and other taxes that are required to offset the carbon tax revenues. In other words, here's the carbon tax but we're going to cut taxes in other places that are going to have a broader effect and make sure that people can still afford to live.

The Smart Prosperity Institute based at the University of Ottawa said: The problem with other parts of the country is this whole notion of carbon price phobia. But one thing it does say, if the program is well designed, carbon pricing works in terms of that it doesn't end up costing people more, that there is a way to make sure that people who are vulnerable, those who are on fixed incomes, do not suffer. But that comes down to how well the carbon pricing is worked out.

But, folks, at some point it's got to come down to where are we going with the future of not only our country, but our province, of where we move in terms of making it affordable for everyone. Because I can guarantee you that, again, a lot of people are not always going to continue driving well into their senior years. I see more and more of my constituents who are no longer driving.

I'll leave that and I'll come back to it later. But, in the end, I do have to look at the tax credit rate for physical activity. It has increased from 8.7 to 17.4, and I'll have to ask, who it will benefit? Will it benefit Bill and Sally? Doubt it. Will it benefit Golda Nichols, who I brought up here in the House who is desperately in need of dental care? No, it will not benefit her. She's got much

more serious needs. Will it benefit those who are facing eviction or seniors who are on a fixed income and watching rents go up and they're being forced out of their units? Will it affect young people who are just being able to afford a place, to own their own home? No.

I guess most people living in poverty won't have that gym membership or children enrolled in sports. A family has to have money to afford the activities in the first place before you can claim the credit. So it doesn't go nearly far enough to encourage the social determinants of health. Clean water, the ability to afford healthy food, housing, to me would have been our better payoff in many ways.

As for the payroll tax, in many ways it's good to see that essentially this is giving a much-needed break to small businesses. But it's interesting, I would say, that this is a significant increase or a significant benefit. But look at how hard we have to fight in this House to look for a livable minimum wage. So I'm glad that small businesses will get the break. But, in the end, will this mean that employees will see an increase in their wages or will they still be confined and have no choice but to live with a legislated poverty wage?

If we look at some of our own costs, right now an affordable livable wage would be around \$21; woefully inadequate what we have right now. We'll get to \$15 an hour by this fall and people will be no further ahead.

So, on one hand, I'm not only concerned with the seniors in my district and across this province, but I'm also concerned with many young people – and I'm talking about school-aged children who, long after we are gone, they'll be the ones trying to make sense out of this world and trying to seek a way forward. Let's hope, by that time, that climate change won't be so far gone that the damage will be irreparable. But it's going to have effects on our economy; it's already having those effects. At some point, we

need to take the bull by the horns and deal with it.

With regard to the other measures, I still think, when it comes down to it, we've got to look at how do we make sure that everyone, whether they can afford a gym membership or not, has the ability to live a healthy life. Not just those who can afford that personal trainer or being part of a sports team, but how do we make sure that everyone benefits.

How do we make sure that when we give a benefit to employers, to business owners, that we also make sure that the employees who are key to the success of that business also have a decent life? I think, overall, that's going to lead to a healthier population and a healthier economy.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I'm now recognizing the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Glad to speak to Bill 38. As my colleagues have outlined this evening, there are three key aspects to this bill. I'll just have a few words to say about all three, I guess.

First of all, on the payroll tax exemptions, I think that's a positive move. We all know that small business is what really drives our economy. I've spoken to employers in the past and it's interesting, I suppose it depends on your perspective, I've had a few employers say to me over the last number of years, conversations, different events I may have been at, the Chamber of Commerce or the Board of Trade or just people I know in business and some of the comments I've heard have been if you look at some of the money that government has handed out to particular businesses over

the years, some of these grants and unforgivable loans and so on, some people have said to me I would prefer if government just scrapped that altogether and just simply cut the payroll tax for everybody. That would be much better for business than keeping a payroll tax that's hindering all small- and medium-sized businesses and handing out these grants and unforgivable loans to, more often than not, businesses who – I mean, everyone is going to take it but don't necessarily need it. That's always questionable.

Sometimes you see some programs that it do make sense and so on and perhaps it is the boost they need, but I've also seen that. I'm not talking about this administration. I'm talking about over my 12 years that I've been here in this House of Assembly. I've seen certain businesses and grants I could think of off the top of my head where when I saw it go through I said my God, I can't believe we just give that particular company \$50,000 or \$100,000. They might have qualified for the program, but my God, they're making millions and we're going to give them a pile of taxpayers' money that they really don't need.

So I see this as a more positive step and I would tend to agree with the employers who would say if we could cut the payroll tax, eliminate it or at least cut it and find ways to reduce that burden, that that's going to go further. That's a much better option than some of these unforgivable loans and grants. Some of them that tend to be questionable. So I certainly would support that move.

The other one is the physical activity grant. On the physical activity grant, because sometimes you're here in the House of Assembly and you're hearing stuff going back and forth and sometimes you get confused yourself as to exactly what it is we're doing here. So maybe the minister by way of nodding her head, if I have it right, because I heard it earlier someone say you can't avail of this. You've got to spend

\$2,000 to get \$300, or whatever the case might be on the tax credit. That might be the case – \$374 or whatever it is –

AN HON. MEMBER: \$174.

P. LANE: \$174 is it?

S. COADY: No, double.

P. LANE: Now it's doubled. So it's going to be \$358 a year, on \$2,000. But my understanding is that you're not forced to spend \$2,000. You could spend \$1,000 and get \$174, you could spend \$500 and get \$80 or whatever the case might be or you could spend \$200 and maybe get \$30 or \$40 or whatever the amount is. So you're not bound to have to spend \$2,000 to get the tax break.

So I thought it was, but somebody sort of gave the impression that that wasn't the way it worked and I just wanted to clarify it.

We're doubling on that, and I don't think anyone is going to say it's a bad thing but, as other people have pointed out, the challenge becomes when you have people and families and so on, the most disadvantaged, who cannot afford a gym membership to begin with or they can't afford to put their kids in sports to begin with and so on.

So that's where sometimes when we get into a program like this, which is 17.4 per cent across the board for everybody, and that's the easy way to do it perhaps, but perhaps instead of going the easy way to do it, maybe the better way, the more effective way would be to say that 17.4 per cent, that's going to apply to families at a certain income. Because if you're somebody who's making \$300,000 or \$400,000 a year, as an example, do you really need that tax break? Do you really need that taxpayers' money? Do you need that tax break to save that money if you're someone who's making \$300,000 or \$400,000 or a million dollars a

year or whatever the case might be? I would argue you don't.

So maybe that amount should apply to, I'll say, middle-income earners. Then maybe with the additional money that's being saved, maybe we need to find a way through – because I think of families, for example, who may be on income support, particularly the children. There are a lot of children that are living in poverty and it's not their fault. Sometimes there are adults living in poverty and, in a lot of cases, it's not their fault either. Some cases, maybe they could be doing more to get themselves out of that situation, but they don't.

But the children don't have a choice. The children are born into that situation and so on. So I would see it better if somehow we could target some of that money to say if there's a family on income support and they have children or whatever the case might be, that they have some way, through some program in there, no different than they could get child care and so on, to be a way that they can choose a sport or two or whatever. If there's a registration fee and money for a uniform or whatever they need, equipment, that could be paid for in totality. That way they get the help; otherwise, they would not be able to participate at all.

I'm not against what you're trying to do there, but I think that simply going one size fits all, it might be an easier way to do it, but I'm not sure it's the right way to do it. I don't think it's the right way to do it.

The other one, of course, is the carbon tax. Like the Member for Conception Bay South said, he was against it since day one, they were, and so was I. I've said since day one that I feel it's nothing but a tax grab, in my opinion.

I'm not certain, if you were to go through *Hansard* at the time when the provincial one was imposed, I'm not sure if I voted for it or not. I know I spoke against it, but I might have voted for it because I was given a

choice: either go with this one or they're imposing that one. I'm not sure, I might have actually voted for it saying, listen, I don't agree with this, but given the fact I have no choice, I have to go one or the other, I'll vote for it. I think that might be what I did, I'm not sure.

That's the way I feel about it, though. I don't agree with it, period, but if we had to do something, this was the lesser of the evils because at least it wasn't being charged to home heating fuel, which was something there was no way I could support that or live with that.

But when we look at the carbon tax itself, and we go back to the same argument that I had and others had from day one, it's about behaviour modification, supposedly. But whose behaviour are you actually modifying? What is changing? If the concern is climate change – my colleague for St. John's Centre is very passionate about his views. I'm going to be nice, he's entitled to his opinion; I don't agree with – it all sounds wonderful in theory, if we were in some utopia or whatever, but reality has to kick in with some of this stuff in terms of what we can actually afford to do and so on.

Let's concentrate on getting Metrobus and public transit working perhaps the way it should be in the more urban area before we start talking about having Metrobus all throughout the province. I just don't think at this point in time it's realistic, I really don't. The population is not there. The distances between communities and so on, it's just not realistic.

If someone had to depend on a bus, if you're in a little tiny community and some of them don't even have a store, and if you have to go to the store to get some milk or something, can you imagine? I have to go to the store to get some milk, up to some community that's 20 kilometres away, I'm going to have to get a bus. I'll see you in three hours. I mean, just think about that.

So there has to be reality.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: My colleague from St. George's - Humber, as soon as I sit down, have at her; tell me how I'm wrong. I appreciate it.

But I just don't think it's realistic, some of what he's saying. In a perfect world, maybe. Maybe I'm not the great visionary that some people are in this House of Assembly, I don't claim to be. But I don't see it to be honest.

So in terms of the carbon tax, I say: Whose behaviour is being changed? So anyone who utilizes their vehicle for work and so on, or as someone said they have to go to the store to get groceries, take the kids to hockey, take the kids to dance, do all this stuff. Realistically, they were driving their car before; they're going to drive their car again. People who have summer homes and cabins and so on, and they have their boats and they have their trikes and all that, and their pickup truck, they're not giving it up. They're still doing it.

Go up to Costco and see the lineups that are there all the time; see all the people there with the gas cans going and the big pickup trucks and everything else. Nothing is changing. I look at my situation, nothing is changing; I haven't stopped. I'm not going to stop either. I'm going to continue to do what I need to do, get to work, get around the city, get to appointments, get to medical things, drop my grandson off at daycare or whatever. I'll drop him off to school now in September. All those things are going to happen, they're not going to change realistically.

So all that's happened is that I'm just having to take more of my expendable income and give it to the federal government, in this case. It was the provincial government. Now I'm giving it to the federal government.

It's a tax grab and nothing is changing. So if you want to change, if the government is really serious about making change, again, I have to say go after the big polluters and put legislation in place.

I'll just use this as an example. We're talking about now electric cars and all that – not that we see many going around here yet. We don't have any infrastructure, hardly. But if we're serious about electric cars, hydrogen cars and all that kind of stuff and we're really serious about it, then whatever timeline they've got – 2050, 2060 or whatever – reduce it. Say to the car manufacturers: At a certain date – and let's lower that date – you're getting out of this business and you're going to produce these kind of cars because, if not, you're not going to be able to sell them in this country. Sorry.

Say to the manufacturers of snow blowers and lawn mowers and chainsaws – there was a guy, actually, here in Newfoundland and Labrador, who came up with some kind of device a couple of years ago for chainsaws and lawn mowers that somehow reduced the carbon, some kind of a catalytic converter or something for them. Say to those manufacturers: You're going to have to come up with another type of snow blower, lawn mower, chainsaw that is not spitting out as much carbon as what these are and you've got this date to do it and, if not, you're not going to be selling them in this country anymore. Force the companies to adapt and come up with low-carbon options.

But you're just going to let the companies just keep on doing what they do, keep on doing it. Keep on selling it and charge me at the pumps to pay for it. They are the ones that are creating all of the stuff that's causing all of the mess and you want us then, as consumers, to pay for it all.

To suggest you're going to get your money back and more money besides. Maybe in the example that the Member for St. John's Centre, the person here who got an electric

home and they don't drive, but they're going to get a cheque anyway. Yes, that person is better off, but I can guarantee you the person who heats their home with furnace oil – and seniors in particular – and drive cars, they're not going to be better off, I can guarantee you that. That's not to mention the fact of some of the other costs associated to it.

Just think about it, with this carbon tax here in Newfoundland, that's driving up the cost of goods and services. The ferries just went up or they're going up. That's going to drive the cost of food up and goods coming across the Island. Now we're going to have to pay more money for that. Then we're paying HST, as the Member from Stephenville said, on top of this. So there's not a chance that we're getting the money back that we're putting in. There's not a chance.

The other reality is, is that nothing is changing. It's not going to. But if we're concerned about climate change, which we all are, then we have to find ways of cutting carbon in ways, like I said, going after manufacturers, going after big polluters; make them pay for it. They're the ones that are going to make all the money off it, let them pay for it, not the consumer.

This is nothing but a tax grab. It's not changing anything, nothing is changing and we're paying more money. Climate change is still happening if it's going to happen.

So if we're serious about climate change, we need to go after the people, we need to do something tangible that's going to make a difference. I submit the carbon tax is not doing anything to change this. It's really not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: It's not changing the use of vehicles or anything around here. The only thing that it's changing is the person who can afford it, their pocket. Those that are sort of, I'll say middle class, it's making it

tighter on them. Then the poor, old senior who used to be able to – I'll say used to be able to, I've talked to seniors; I've got lots in my district – now when the summer comes – I remember a couple I know very well that said Paul, do you know what? We don't go anywhere, we don't have any money to travel or nothing. The only thing we look forward to really is in the summertime, we get aboard the car, myself and the wife, and we drive up to Bay Roberts. We take a drive up the old Conception Bay Highway. We go up to Bay Roberts and maybe we'll have lunch at Powell's or whatever the case might be; maybe on the way back we might stop at Bergs for an ice cream cone. That's their little bit of pleasure, their little bit of joy that they have to do something, to get out of the house. All we're doing is taking it away from them. That's all we're doing.

Everybody else who got cabins and everything else, they're going to keep their cabins. They're still going out on their quads. They're still driving their cars and they're still driving their trucks, just being gouged for doing it, but nothing else is changing. So the carbon tax, as far as I'm concerned, is a bad idea all the way around, as I've said from day one. I didn't support it then, I don't support it now.

Obviously, what we're going to be doing here is we're removing the carbon tax from the province, in terms of the province collecting it, and now the feds are going to collect it.

I'm glad to see that my colleagues across the way are now against the carbon tax. I'm glad they are. But I wish you had been against the carbon tax from day one. When the money was coming into the provincial coffers and the provincial government was collecting the carbon tax, never heard a sound, everything was fine. Now, because the feds are taking the money, coming out of general revenues, now we have an issue – didn't have an issue before. I have to say it's certainly not consistent, but I'm glad you're against it now and I'm against it, too,

which is why I'll be voting to have it removed.

As I say, I'll also, I guess, support the increase to the tax break on physical activity, it's a good thing. Although, again, I would say to the minister, you have this this year, but I'd really like for next year to look at the income levels of people who can avail of this. If people are making, like I say, over \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year, they don't need that tax break. Take that money and give it to some poor children that are living in poverty, that their family is extremely low income, who otherwise would not be able to participate in any sports. Find a way to give them the money and pay for their sports, their uniform, whatever the case might be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'm now recognizing the Member for St. George's - Humber.

S. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't intend to speak long on this piece of legislation but I just thought I'd speak to a few points that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands made.

I was really sort of taken aback a bit when he said that metro systems or public transit systems wouldn't work in rural Newfoundland, we should concentrate only on metro St. John's and places more urban and things like that.

I just wanted to inform the House, inform any listeners that might be out there, that there are many places in rural Newfoundland that already have public transportation systems. They're funded through the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

Some of the places that have them: New Wes Valley has a transportation system; Stephenville - Port au Port, myself and the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, attended the opening, I believe, of the system in Corner Brook, the bus system; another place, Happy Valley-Goose Bay has such a system; Bay St. George South, in my district, has a bus system that's working; Pasadena in my district also has one; Coast of Bays in Harbour Breton; and Nain has a sort of a system that works for their places.

I just wanted to make people aware of that. This is something that we should be looking at expanding to other areas. It's something that we should be making people aware of, rather than telling them that it can't be done. We should be using these examples of things that are working, that are being operated by volunteers and they're making real good sense in rural areas of this province.

I just wanted to put that out there and that's all I wanted to say.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I'm now recognizing the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to speak about Bill 38. I know that Bert and Helen Fisher are watching from Elliston tonight.

Bert and Helen Fisher are good friends with the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. When the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands visits the peninsula, he stays at the cabins that are owned by Bert and Helen Fisher. The only thing I would say to you tonight, he's tuned in here to have an understanding of what Bill 38 is all about

and probably what his Member's viewpoints might be on Bill 38, thus I'll provide that.

I wish we had public transit in the District of Bonavista, but we don't. But it's a good initiative that we ought to be pursuing. Maybe if there's a pilot going on shortly, then I would suggest to the minister that maybe the District of Bonavista could be just that pilot for an initiative to go ahead.

Every one of us would celebrate the payroll tax exemption. The payroll tax exemption is a good thing. There is no doubt about that. I can recall a short time ago I had talked about and presented a petition where seniors in the province noticed that once an indexed income they get from the federal government, they receive, only to find that their provincial contribution to them is diminished somewhat because of the formula and the calculator that we would have.

So right now with the payroll tax, we have an exemption at \$2 million. But I would say to you several people talked about the seniors and the plight of seniors in our economy, in our cost-of-living crisis environment that we would find in, and they have difficulty understanding why the federal government indexes and as soon as they index for the cost of living or the consumer price index, it's the provincial government that would bring it back down and reduce their amount they would receive.

The understanding is that the online calculator that was in place in 2015 that is visible online has the cost of living from 2015. So while we do keep their income at a stationary level, it is not our calculator and our amount that we've gotten through our calculator is not indexed. That is why when they receive from the federal government, we reduce what we would pay them.

I think in my response or my petition, the minister had said that's something I think that we would look at, that calculator, to look

at the threshold and see if we can raise that threshold just like we did for the payroll tax threshold to \$2 million. Therefore that will put more money into those seniors that my friend from Mount Pearl - Southlands had talked about and what we would all discuss.

The second one is the Physical Activity Tax Credit. When I was in Estimates with my friend, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, I had asked him about him and his government, or him hankering his wagon or hitching his wagon to the Physical Activity Tax Credit to make us the healthiest province in 2031. His response was that has nothing to do with us, CSSD. That is, I would assume, Finance.

So two things we utilize to be the healthiest province in Newfoundland and Labrador. I would tell the fishers it is the Physical Activity Tax Credit and it is a sugar tax. There might be some other initiatives but those are the two that I would throw out and I'm sure, in due course, someone will give a statement as to some other initiatives. The curriculum is being revised in schools from K to 6. It is now into the intermediate grades, which is a good thing. But those primarily are the two.

When it comes to the Physical Activity Tax Credit, the minister said today that there were 29,390 filings, and that is good.

S. COADY: In 2021.

C. PARDY: In 2021.

So I would love to know how many filings there were in 2020. Would it be the same number of filings in 2020 as 2021? Because how you would gauge the success of your incentive, which is good, to get children involved in activity, is by how much it's grown.

So in 2021, there were only 25,000 filings, but then we come out the Physical Activity Tax Credit and we find that it's gone to 29,000 one might assume and say, well,

that is paying some dividends. It would be nice to know the data before to where it is to see how effective it is.

Again, I reference, in the speech from the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, he had asked and said: What's the tax bracket of those that are entering their children in the – I think that was the gist of what he was saying. But I can guarantee you, government does not know.

S. COADY: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: You do?

Because when I asked about the oil to electric, as to everyone over 80,000 – remember I made that wild assumption and you said no, it couldn't and, in Estimates, you said we didn't have the data at that time. You've got it now. I'm glad you've got the data now. I just wondered as to where it was.

I would say, the problem is that in those lower income brackets, they can't afford to put their children into sport and that is an issue. We don't have lower income families, adults with children, being able to afford to put their children in activities and that's not addressed.

So the credit is fine, the only thing being it doesn't address those low income. What did, which the Leader of our party had stated on a couple of occasions, was the Canadian Tire Jumpstart foundation; it did a wonderful job and government put in matching funds. We had a lot of money out there to be able to put children from low-income homes into activities. Without taking my word, I was then principal of Clarenville Middle School, I know what an effect it had with programming and involving children in our school in Clarenville.

You could ask the mayor of Clarenville, John Pickett, who was on the Tribay Chapter of the Jumpstart foundation. You can ask the guidance counsellors in both

schools, the administrators in both schools in Clarenville, Riverside and Clarenville Middle. It was a great success. It was in our poverty reduction plan that we had so much success within 2005 to 2015 but we didn't really see it after that and if it did, it had a short window. That was a program that got children from low socio-economic homes into physical activity. I would say that's something that should be looked into.

I want, in the few minutes we've got, because the Physical Activity Tax Credit is going to make us, according to government, in part, the healthiest province in Canada. Let me throw a few things out to you and I want to give you four examples that would be out there existing in my district. If we address each one of those four, I think we could become the healthiest province in Canada.

This lady tells me to stand up and use her name. I'm not using her name and I'm not going to use it tonight, even though she is disappointed in me because I don't use her name when I stand up. I'm just going to call her by her first name. You've heard me use her name before: Sandra.

Sandra lives by herself in her own home. With the latest increase, she now gets \$637 a month. She burns oil. She couldn't transition, Speaker, from the oil to the electric because of the layout of the house, plus she never had the funds in order to do so. So the only thing I would say to you is that think about what it costs to full up an oil tank in the winter. She gets \$637. She'd be the first one to tell the minister, tonight, if she was here, is that I've got trouble feeding myself and living in my own home. I

I've had the conversation with the minister and said, what is she supposed to do? I tried to convince her that I think there are some initiatives ongoing to review the Income Supplement program. I think there's a basic income – not I think, I know there's a basic income all-party Committee that's established and they're doing some good

work, but I would hope that it's going to manifest itself in the time that something is going to happen to give Sandra some relief.

So when we talk about becoming the healthiest province in Canada, how can we do that to know that Sandra on that income, burning oil, is going to be able to survive? She can't.

I presented a petition today, and this remarkable lady, her name is Delores Whiffen. Delores, unfortunately, had a stroke around Christmastime, great lady, never on a medication until now, until she had the stroke. Ended up in the Miller Centre, which she raves about the staff in the Miller Centre. When she left to go home, they had the tag on it, as far as instable – whatever the tag would phrase. Anyway, she wasn't stable on her legs and her left arm and her left leg wasn't working well – a fall risk. So she was a fall risk and she went home. She got three hours of home support for a week.

They told her to call for physio at Bonavista hospital, but the process, as I said in a petition today, was that she would call for physio at the Bonavista Hospital starting at 9, Thursday morning. But, if you don't get through the line goes dead and you get a message to say: Try again next Thursday, at 9 a.m. She's been home for five weeks. Five weeks she's been calling to try to get an appointment for physio and each time at 9, usually at 9:15, she gets the message: Sorry, call again next Thursday.

I would say if we want to be the healthiest province in Canada, Delores Whiffen ought not to be waiting five weeks. With a lady who's really dogged determined to make sure that she's going to be recovered by July, we've got to assist her in her rehabilitation, and that's an injustice and that's wrong.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We talk about seniors. I had a magnificent, wonderful senior by the name of Ros Coleridge in Trinity who passed away recently. I can recall her telling me not that long ago, she said I feel embarrassed. She said I'm embarrassed that I can't live in my own home unless her one son helps her to exist in her own home. She said that's what it's come to. She worked her whole life and only to find out that where she is now, she was dependent upon her son. If I went out with some friends, she says quite possibly I haven't got the money for a cup of tea if she went to the store. You hear that a lot when it comes to seniors.

I know that Bill 38, when we talk about it here, we're going to become the healthiest province in Canada. The Physical Activity Tax Credit is one of the vehicles of which it's going to happen. But it's not going to help those seniors out there, and that's what we hear when we hear about the budget in 2023. We haven't moved them a whole lot.

The minister would say that we've added on 5 per cent this year, 10 per cent last year. I'm not sure if you add up what the consumer price index and the cost of living has been from last year to this year, but I would assume it's about 15 per cent from last year to this year. So really we've kept them where they are. Does that help? You bet your bottom dollar it helps. But we've only maintained them in the state like I just mentioned with those two individuals. So we've got to do better. That's the moral of the story: We've got to do better when it comes to that.

I had one gentleman in George's Brook-Milton. I'm not sure if he's watching or not. It is no good for me to tell you if he is because I don't know if he is. He came from Labrador and he came down back to George's Brook-Milton. When he was in Alberta, for his type 2 diabetes, whatever he needed was covered. Everything in Alberta was covered.

Now when he's back here at home, he would often say that he is prescribed by his

doctor Ozempic. It's a drug that he's prescribed but it's not covered. It's not covered by our provincial government so he finds himself, while it was recommended, he's got to pay \$250 a month. He's a diabetic that needs to take insulin. Does he have to pay for his needles? Yes, he does. Does he have to pay for his test strips? Yes, he does. If we're talking about a lot of the seniors and the people that we're talking about out in our population which currently have diabetes, this is an added cost that they've got to endure in order to make sure that they exist.

What do they give up? They can't not put oil in their oil tank. They could reduce their medication. They could reduce their food intake or they don't go for that cup of tea with their friends. But something has got to give. So that is a point that I think that's been prevalent by everybody who spoke here, we talked about the well-being of many of the residents, in particular the seniors, that would be in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and their plight.

When we had the carbon tax debate and we were opposed, the government was in favour. I had stated at that time and I think, immediately after, the Member for St. John's Centre had spoke, we can't have people hurting in our population. We all believe in climate change. We all believe that we need to take action to remediate; nobody disbelieves that. But along that journey to get there, we can't hurt people.

If people are listening that burn oil now, to know that they're going to have 17 cents added per litre to their fuel to heat their homes, that's a rather daunting amount for them to have to endure. Who bears that responsibility? Would it be the independents, the NDP, the Official Opposition? It's government. Government bears the responsibility of any hurt that would be created out in our population. Does *Budget 2023* help? Yes. Does it help enough? No. That is the way I feel. It

doesn't help enough and I would say to you we've got all these people that are in hardship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): If the minister speakers now we will close debate.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I'll speak for just a few moments, having listened to the debate this evening.

I want to remind the viewers this evening that we are discussing, not the budget, particularly, but some acts that are caused by the budget. We're dealing with An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and an Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, that will basically bring together three tax-related initiatives that impact revenues: an increase to the exemption threshold for the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax, improvements to the Physical Activity Tax Credit to encourage and support physical activity and to repeal – to repeal – the federally imposed carbon tax.

Now, I want to say hello to two people that are listening apparently from Elliston, Bert and Helen Fisher. I listened closely because I have a couple of the executive in the Department of Finance who hail from Elliston. They reached out to me tonight and said when you gave a shout-out to the people of Elliston, they reached out and said that they're from Elliston as well. They are listening intently, they have been listening intently to debate and have been very, very engaged in many of these aspects.

Allow me to take a moment, because that's all I'm going to take, Speaker, to address some of the issues that I heard this evening.

First of all, on the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax, I heard from, I think, every speaker that it was a good thing that we were raising the threshold; very, very important thing to assist business and to continue to do so. We're going to continue to work very hard to lower the cost of business here in the province. That's a given.

In this bill tonight are ways in which the rules that are required to change so that we can raise that threshold so that 1,250 businesses in this province, some of them, will save \$14,000 – a lot of them will save \$14,000 – this year on their cost of doing business. Very pleased that we were able to do that in this year's budget, supported, of course, by the business community and many, many people acknowledged that tonight.

The second one was on the Physical Activity Tax Credit. This would allow for the doubling of the physical activity, the rebate, the refundable credit. I want to give you some statistics because I heard from a number of people tonight: Well, how many people are affected? We know this credit was only implemented in 2021 and, as I said tonight, there were just under 30,000 people who took advantage during the 2021 year as it was just introduced. We'll know more once the 2022 tax year is under way. But two-thirds of the claimants earned \$100,000, individually, and double the number of claimants under \$50,000 than over \$100,000 – double the number of claimants earned under \$50,000 than over \$100,000. So it really is something you'll see about 75 per cent, I think, roughly in that earned less than \$100,000. So it was a significant amount of people in what we'll call under \$100,000.

Now, I will also say that I listened intently and I thought it was a very good suggestion by the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – in fact, it will be something that I'll put on the list for next year's budget – of perhaps some supports to help lower

income families to be able to take advantage of sports and sporting activities. I had a conversation already with the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, it's something that we'll put on the list for next year. So a good suggestion and thank you for that.

I've already spoken about the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax, I think people were generally supportive of that. The Physical Activity Tax Credit, that's a very good thing. I think, Speaker, any time we can put money back in the hands of the people of this province, all the better to do so. We've doubled the amount of refundable tax credit, very happy to do that.

The third big thing in this budget bill, Bill 38, is the repealing, and I'm going to say it again, repealing of the federally imposed carbon tax effective July 1, 2023.

Now, I'm going to say a few things. The reason why we're repealing it, of course, is that we have now learned that the federal government is coming in with a backstop, as they're imposing in Nova Scotia and other provinces. They're coming in with a backstop. We had negotiated with the federal government at the time of imposition of the federally imposed tax to exempt certain things in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, such as, and I think this is critical, home heating fuel, aviation fuel for flights within the province, fish processing, mineral and offshore exploration, silviculture, on-grid electricity production that's not regulated by the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act* and government operations including municipalities.

Speaker, we now know that the federal government will come in with a backstop effective July 1, 2023. So I would ask this House to join the Premier and the minister who have spoken to, been vocal, been visible, been engaged, been concerned, have written multiple letters, have spoken

and advocated to the federal government, to ensure that we keep those exemptions.

The federal government has decided that will not happen. Therefore, today, in Bill 38, we are repealing the federally imposed carbon tax. If we do not repeal this carbon tax today, then, come July 1, there will actually be two carbon taxes, so we must repeal this carbon tax. We must repeal this carbon tax.

I ask Members opposite to stand with the people in this House of Assembly, to stand strong. They talked about a show of force in this House of Assembly. They talked about, you know, how we should all join together. I am asking the Members opposite to do just that. To stand with this government and say, we do not accept that the carbon tax will be imposed on home heating oil. It's time to stand up and support that; time to stand up and support the repealing.

Now I've heard them say that they support the changes to the Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax. They support that in the bill. I've heard them talk about the Physical Activity Tax Credit. I think they're supportive of that. I'm also saying to the Members opposite, we are repealing the federally imposed carbon tax.

I am asking them on the key point here – the key point, I think we all agree, I know we all agree because I've been listening for the last multiple hours that no one in this House wants the carbon tax imposed on home heat. No one in this House wants the carbon tax imposed on home heat. So I'm asking the Members opposite to vote in favour of this bill so that we can repeal the federally imposed carbon tax. We can support the business community with an increase in the threshold, to help the Post-Secondary Education Tax and thirdly that we can double the refundable tax credit on the Physical Activity Tax Credit.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 38 be now read a second time.

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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

The motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 38)

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

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

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act and An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 38)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

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.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30
o'clock tomorrow.

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