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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Government Business

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is early in the morning, but happy to be here, happy to stand and represent the people of my District of Cape St. Francis and I'm happy to speak to *Budget 2024*.

Madam Speaker, when I was thinking about what I was going to say here this morning, I went back through the four budgets. When we came in this House in March of 2021, the budget was *CHANGE starts here*. In 2022: *CHANGE is in the air*. *Budget 2023* was *Your Health. Our Priority*. And, in 2024, *Transforming Our Health. Our Economy. Our Province*.

Happy to have been a part of those four discussions, those four debates. Happy to stand here today, in my role to discuss *Budget 2024*, and I'm going to touch on a couple of topics this morning. But as I did, when we stood for Interim Supply, I went back through my notes over the last couple of years when we debated Interim Supply. One thing that jumped out at me in my notes over the last number of years is the question that says: Will this budget meet the collective needs of the people of our province?

When I think about that question and I think about my critic role – and I'll start with housing; I did have a couple of questions yesterday and asked about housing. As I said yesterday, there are thousands of people on a wait-list for housing – over 3,000. That number is staggering. We have people who want to buy homes and can't afford to. We have people dealing with inflation, the high interest rates. I have people in my district who are couch surfing. I'm sure many others in this hon. House have the same issues.

I can say, with surety, my constituency assistant and I are answering calls on a daily basis with respect to the lack of available housing in my district. We have seniors who are looking to downsize because they can't afford to make the payments to stay in their own homes. We have individual examples that arise, Madam Speaker, when we have a single mother of three, who's trying to get away from a relationship and has to move into a one-bedroom basement apartment for four people, because of the lack of availability of housing, of places to stay. That's why some people are couch surfing.

We have shelters here in the province that are full. These are real-time, real-live examples of what we're dealing with here in the province on a regular basis. We have homeless people living in tents, at the tent encampment, as we are all well aware of.

As I said, a friend of mine and I had the opportunity to visit the tent encampment at the Colonial Building. We spoke with people who are living there. We spoke with the volunteers who are there on a daily basis, helping these individuals who feel left out, and it's not a very easy situation when we have to lay our heads on the pillows at night to know that there are people living in this environment.

We have vulnerable people in our society who are living in unsafe dwellings and a tent is their alternative. Well, the Minister of

Housing said yesterday that they – and I'm paraphrasing – visit the tent encampment on a daily basis. Well, if they go to the tent encampment on a daily basis, what time of the day are they there? Are they there at 9 a.m. or 9:30 in the morning when most people are leaving the tent encampments and going looking for a bite to eat or going looking for some services?

I was there at 5 in the evening and there was 21 people at the encampment. It was no trouble to tell, Madam Speaker, you can see on their faces and in their eyes, the stress that they're under and what they're going through. It pulls on the heartstrings, I can assure you of that.

I thanked the minister when he said that they're there on a daily basis, but I want to know what is exactly being offered. Are they speaking with them on a regular basis? Are they going there and there are two or three people at the tent encampment because they've dispersed for the morning?

All these issues are very important. It was even mentioned here yesterday by one of my colleagues – I don't know who, but we have post-secondary students who are giving up their studies and returning to their homes out of province because there's nowhere to live here. These are our future leaders who we are educating here at Memorial University. I find that troubling. I really find it troubling.

We also discussed here in this House about the number of new housing initiatives that were announced in the budget. I'm sure we'll have the answers given how many are already announced. Are any of those announcements from previous years?

We have had, in other departments, announcements that have been carried forth from one year to the next but how much is actually new money when we're looking at the housing announcements in *Budget 2024: Transforming Our health. Our Economy. Our Province.*

Madam Speaker, I'm going to go back to the number of 3,000 and I want to put that in perspective. When we left the House yesterday, that number stuck in my mind. My hon. colleague from Exploits has a town in his district, the Town of Botwood. We were told that there are 3,008 people on a wait-list for housing.

According to the last census done in the province, the Town of Botwood has 3,008 people. That puts it in perspective when you have a town the size of Botwood with 3,008 people who are looking for homes – they are looking for homes.

The town the size of Botwood puts into perspective, for me, the number is dead on the mark: 3,008. As an hon. Member opposite has always said, numbers don't lie, and that puts it in perspective. It really does. When you're looking at 3,008 people, how many homes are we looking at here? Well, in the Town of Botwood, according to the official numbers, there are approximately 1,250 homes in Botwood. We are looking at 1,250 homes to house 3,008 people. I'm sure you could do it for a little less than that, but that's a rough number.

According to one of the news releases from government with respect to housing, which was on April 10, \$20 million to construct 50 provincially owed units in Corner Brook. I've stood here many times and the hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance realizes that. I will give credit where credit is due. That's a good thing. That is a good start, no doubt. But when we're looking at 1,250 homes needed for 3,008 people – and this is 50 provincially owed units, which, according to the news release, is going to take two years to complete, completed by 2026.

We look at April of '24 to 2026, how many more people are going to be included over and above that 3,008 number by the time we hit 2026? All of this comes before us and all of this is very concerning when we look at the number that's needed and what we

need to do as a province to have these people placed in homes, then we look at the building capacity.

When we look at the building capacity here in the province and the construction industry that's needed to put this housing in place, is all that currently available as well? Will we come to a point where we are bottlenecked and it can't advance and the buildings can't advance in a timely manner?

What do we actually need to get that new housing available and construction started and keep it on time without being held back, without being bottlenecked?

All of these things come before me; I'm sure they come before every Member here. But when we look at the number of people who are requiring housing, what is needed to go forward? It certainly is more than concerning when it comes to what's in this budget, and, of course, from the government's own news release for 50 homes, \$20 million to construct. That's very heavy, it's very heavy.

Madam Speaker, I'll go back to my opportunity I had to visit the tent encampment at the Colonial Building. While we were there speaking with the volunteers, and I'll give a shoutout publicly to the volunteers that are there on a daily basis, providing a lot of necessities. At one point while I was there, there were four propane tanks dropped off – four 20-pound propane tanks –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: – by an individual who wished to remain nameless. The lady is a senior citizen. I know the price of filling one 20-pound propane tank. This lady was doing it on a weekly basis. She's taken it upon herself to fill four propane tanks, go to the encampment, pick them up, fill them and drop them back off so that the people that are living there have the opportunity for heat and to cook. I was blown away by this lady.

As I said, a senior citizen, I'm sure on a fixed income but wants to do her part to know that these people are not cold, that these people are not hungry. And we do know that there are many other people that are donating food on a regular basis, donating meals, but she did her part with propane.

While I was there, there was a gentleman who was released from Her Majesty's Penitentiary and he walked from the penitentiary to the Colonial Building with his clear plastic bag in his hand and the belongings that he had, with his 8½ by 11 envelope. He had nowhere to go. There was nothing offered to him when he left the penitentiary that day and he walked straight to Colonial Building to see if he could get his head in a tent.

I daresay this House is very quiet right now because that is reality, Madam Speaker. For that gentleman, 38 years old, to be faced with that; no other opportunity and this is what he is faced with. I was there and I still can't believe it happened that this individual had to go to Tent City to try to get shelter for the night and had no other supports.

So, when we talk about wraparound supports, we need to keep that in mind as well. We need to keep that in mind for anyone released from the penitentiary.

Madam Speaker, these are real life examples. This is what people are going through. That's what we are hearing, that's what we are witnessing, and it comes back to the budget and what it has to deal with these examples. As I said when I started the question: Will the budget meet the collective needs of the people of our province? That is something that I do struggle with.

I fully realize what the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance has on her plate, I do. I've stood here before and I've said that, but when we are here discussing a budget and we're dealing with these issues on a regular basis, and I see it for myself with my boots

on the ground, that's why I have to share it here, Madam Speaker.

In the remaining time I have left, Madam Speaker, I wish to recognize Volunteer Week, as the theme is Every Moment Matters. I'm going to give a shout-out to the wonderful volunteer groups in my district for what they do on a daily basis. As a volunteer all my life, I realize how taxing it can be. I've stood in this House in last year's budget and discussed volunteers not able to do the work because they can't afford to volunteer any more. I've had that discussion as well with respect to the cost of living, the cost of the price of fuel, putting gas in their vehicles and doing what they need to.

I understand that, but I want to give a shout-out to those in my district, the fire departments, the Lions Clubs, the 50-plus clubs, the community volunteers and community committees. I'll give a specified shout-out to the Town of Bauline, for their community committee, one of the most active committees in my district. The amount of work that they do with the few people that they have, they are to be commended. I've attended many functions in the Town of Bauline –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: – and I want to give a shout-out there.

We have scouting and guiding movements and various sports teams, but today I want to take this opportunity to speak to the volunteer fire departments. Everyone here knows that's something near and dear to my heart and whenever I get the opportunity to speak on the volunteer departments, I will do so.

On Monday of this week, I had an honorary life member from the Town of Torbay, Mr. Joe Tilley, was here and recognized in a Member's statement and Fire Chief Rodney Gaudet and Fire Prevention Officer Ray

Clarke, where all here from Torbay fire department. I realize and understand the important work that they do and the Town of Pouch Cove, with the Pouch Cove volunteer, but I want to bring up a topic this morning, and I know that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety is fully aware of it, we had the opportunity to discuss it briefly.

Both departments in my district are trained in Level I and Level II offensive and defensive firefighting, responsible for Code 4 medical calls, responsible for high-angle rescue and cold-water rescue; a very vast amount of dedication in both those departments. The problem that we're facing now in the Town of Pouch Cove, with the Pouch Cove Fire Department, is with respect to the SCBA sets that are going to be coming out of date this December. For the Members of the House of Assembly and for those listening, SCBA is Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus, crucial and essential for offensive firefighting.

The problem is, in December of this year, we will have 14 sets of SCBA gear come out of service in the Town of Pouch Cove – 14 sets of gear. That's 14 firefighters that will not be able to respond offensively and, Madam Speaker, you have to realize that one set of SCBA gear is \$9,700 – \$9,700 for one set of SCBA.

If we do the math, it's very easy: \$135,800. I can assure this House that the Town of Pouch Cove cannot write a cheque for that line item, and I fully understand it and appreciate what the Minister of Justice and Public Safety has to face with respect to the collective needs of fire and emergency services across the province.

There's \$3.76 million, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, in this budget for fire apparatus and equipment. So getting back to the \$138,500, if those 14 sets of bunker gear are not approved for the Town of Pouch Cove under some way, shape or form – if it's through the town, if it's through fundraising, if it's through government

grants – I shudder to think what’s going to happen with respect to offensive firefighting in my hometown.

We cannot let that happen. With respect to bunker suits, and for the benefit of this House and those listening, bunker suits also have a shelf life and bunker suits each are \$3,200. Do the math when you have 35 volunteers in the Town of Pouch Cove, it adds up quickly.

I want to give a shout-out to them, but I also want to bring that to the attention of this House because its important. You’ve heard me say it before, the volunteer firefighters in the municipalities across this province – and I stand to be corrected, I think there are about 6,000 volunteer firefighters – I shudder to think where we would be without those individuals, those brave men and women in our municipalities for what they offer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I’ll go back to Code 4 medical calls because that is something that is crucial. We all realize ambulatory services here in the city, what stress they’re under, and most of the time we are in red alert. Then we rely on our volunteer fire departments and those brave men and women to come in and perform the Code 4 medical response that is needed.

One more quick thing with respect, Madam Speaker, 10 years ago, you could get a pumper unit to a fire department for around \$300,000. Today, you’re pushing \$550,000 to \$600,000. You know that; I know that; most of us do here. The problem is, we’re going to have a lot of outdated equipment.

My colleague from Placentia West - Belleview spoke of it many times, with respect to services in one part of his district. That’s something that we need to be mindful; \$3.76 million for fire apparatus and equipment might seem like a lot of money, and that amount is welcomed in that line

item in the budget, but it does not near do what’s needed as we go forward in 2024.

Madam Speaker, my time is running down. I appreciate your attention, of course, the government Members’ attention. I will have opportunity to speak on this again, and I do thank you all for the opportunity.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

First off, I guess, I want to say a quick shout-out to College of the North Atlantic who turned 60 years old – as an alumnus of the College of the North Atlantic, I can’t not congratulate them on 60 years. I’ll do that first because I have a lot of fond memories of the College of the North Atlantic. Even after I left the college, they were in Labrador West, I did do a lot of work with them when I was with the Heritage Society. I want to wish them a happy 60th birthday as an alumnus from there and Labrador West having a lot of alumni from College of the North. I’ll send them a bouquet and congratulate them on 60 years. It’s a fantastic institution and I have a lot of fond memories there.

I will go into that now. I do want to talk about, I guess, the thing that residents of Labrador West have a love/hate relationship with and that would be the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. The reason why I was bringing that up is that we saw some changes and, fair enough, but, at the same time, it’s not exactly what Labrador West residents hoped for. Their relationship with it is that we don’t have the same services available to us in Labrador as available here on the Island. For most part, mostly concentrated here on the Northeast Avalon. The reason is that we’re seeing less and less services being

available in Labrador in the last number of years.

I did bring up the question and I'll give a little bit there. Amputees came to me recently – two individuals actually came to me, completely confused on why they couldn't access MTAP when there is no prosthesis tech available in Labrador. They were having to go back and forth consistently, quite a lot, a few trips to the Northeast Avalon, to the Miller Centre, to have their limbs looked at and to be adjusted for a fit and all the other things I can only imagine they go through. They were very upset by the fact that they were disqualified from the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. I brought it up and, fair enough, and hopefully it gets addressed.

There are other services that are similar that are completely exempt from Medical Transportation Assistance Program. Another one was someone had to go out for services for a podiatrist. We don't have a podiatrist in Lab West, but they're disqualified under MTAP so they had to go out. So there are a lot of different things like that. We're talking about the continuum of care and bringing all these services together. Well, it's not going to happen in Labrador West because we just can't have a specialist on every corner. We understand that. But having access to that individual, even though they're in a different part of the province, needs to be critical.

I'm not standing in this House of Assembly and talking about Lab West without at least mentioning the Medical Transportation Assistance Program and the work that needs to be done to make it a holistic service that actually brings care to people or people to care, whatever way. If you bring a specialist into Labrador City or Labrador West to do something, fantastic, you've brought care to the people. But if you can't do that, you have to get them to where they need to be.

Once again, we're still hearing stories of people who are saying I just can't afford to go out or, in some cases, with these amputees, they were getting exempt from the program and they couldn't get out. We need to make sure that we're not leaving anyone behind. It's happening far too often for my taste.

These are the things that we need to do, is to get on the ground and actually speak to the individuals who are using these programs and people who need access to these programs.

Another thing that I just can't not talk about when it comes to Medical Transportation Assistance Program is the burden of paperwork – especially seniors – on how to get through the program. Requesting all these letters and these signatures and all these things. I got an individual I've known my entire life. This man was the most patient man I've ever met in my entire life. A very sweet, caring man. It was the first time in my life – and I've known him since I was a child – to actually see him completely lose it. It was over paperwork for the Medical Transportation Assistance Program.

This is where we need to have a conversation about signatures and letters and what is actually required, legitimately required, for the program to work and to get there, versus just blatant red tape and a burden of paperwork.

I'll throw that over to the minister for consideration and, hopefully, the minister will take my concerns and stuff over that and go back and try to work together to actually make a program that Labradorians can use, understand and actually get people to where they need to be. Which is to the office, or the clinic of a specialist, so that that way we can make sure that we have meaningful and fulfilling lives and get a lot of their care looked after.

Speaking of health care in Labrador West, we were told, oh yeah, don't worry, Jordan,

we're going to get a collaborative care clinic up in Labrador West. Well, it's been over a year. No location has been picked out. No people have been hired. Is this a two-year or three-year project, because the way it put to me was we're getting this done, we're going to get this done, we're going to get health care in Lab West. Well, we're still waiting for this collaborative care clinic to even announce that it has a location. We have the announcement that it was going to happen, but it seems to have stalled somewhere along the way.

I've had people call my office, day in, day out, I lost my family doctor, I can't (inaudible). Mom got this condition and she needs to get her referrals and needs to get this. There's no way to actually get people into primary care. We've had a nurse practitioner office open in the hospital there. They stopped taking patients. They just couldn't – it went from a walk-in clinic into – if you've already signed up for here, that's it, no more, no less.

So now we have the nurse practitioner at the clinic that was trying to do a good thing and bridge the gap until we had some more primary care in the region and even they have to start turning away people. Now, unfortunately, another physician, due to health concerns, is no longer practising, so now we're down another physician and we're still waiting for other primary care.

So we're wondering where is this collaborative care clinic? Where is this going? You announced it over a year ago in the last budget and haven't seen nothing, not a peep, not a sound, nothing since. So we have to ask ourselves what's going on here? Why would you announce something that never even rolled out? There's nothing on that.

This is a concern that the people of Labrador West have raised with me. The people are concerned that they want to be able to access primary care. It's not like we can get in a car and go to the next town

over or go there. We are on the very edge of this province and the next community to us is Churchill Falls, then after that is Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Happy Valley-Goose Bay is over 600 kilometres away. Unless you're expecting people in Lab West to drive 600 kilometres for an appointment – that's not going to happen. We have to understand that it's a responsibility that we actually try to do and get people to services or get services to people.

We're fed up. Legitimately, we're fed up with the lack of understanding, the lack of actual concern and the lack of to do and to help put resources into this region. Remember now, we have over 2,000 people working in heavy industry. This is a region that does have a lot of economic output, but at the same time, we're putting a lot of people into an industry that is actually hard on their health.

You talk to anyone who works in either of the mine, you have to understand they work, but at what price? The price of their health. This is something that we have to understand, is that a lot of these people are working in an environment that has a negative impact on their health and now we're absent of basically the most basic things of primary care.

You have to take this seriously. We're all going to treat this province fair; we want our fair share. We want our ability to actually provide services to a region, but right now, like I said, we're down physicians; we were promised a clinic that never ever showed up; we are not getting the resources that we've been promised, let alone, deserve; we just want our fair share.

What is going on? Why aren't we actually taking this seriously?

We got MTAP and the burden of paperwork for people to get to care and now with the basic care, obviously the primary care, we can't even get that, so what's going on here?

Then we got to move over to the other side of heavy industry and one of the pitfalls of actual prosperity and that is the mental health and addictions side of things. We have long struggled in Labrador West with addictions and mental health. It's no secret. It comes with prosperity and these things always come with the side of addictions.

I've seen it my entire life living in Labrador West, the demon that is addictions in Labrador West, but we don't have any addictions treatment clinic in Labrador. We have people wait-listed, upon wait-listed, upon wait-listed to go out to the two here on the Island. I know for a fact, and I know from speaking with people with addictions, people I grew up with and I spent my entire life with, people who have battling this, tell me the minute that you decide to have a moment of clarity where you want to be able to find help or anything like that, it's never available.

You go there, you talk to them, you're waiting four or five months to get into addictions treatment. By the time that comes around, sometimes the will of actually going to seek treatment just disappears because you feel defeated.

This is why I mentioned to the minister before, and I'll mention it again, there needs to be a plan to put some sort of addictions treatment centre in Labrador. We need to be able to access it in a lot faster timeline than currently are available options to people. It needs to happen.

I know they talked about their committee and stuff like that, but this is a serious concern. We've been fighting this demon in Lab West for far too long and nothing was done and now we need that. We need to have some ability to say, if someone finds that moment of clarity, that moment that they want to go and seek that treatment and better their lives, we should be able to give them a way better timeline than months to wait for that. It's hard to see and watch.

I'll even go back to MTAP again: The moment I had an individual who finally got their call to go to treatment and they obviously had no money to get out to their treatment and they had to apply for MTAP. It took so long that they actually missed their actual start date for treatment.

So this goes back to the burden of paperwork and bureaucracy and stuff like that. The individual actually had the moment to actually go and seek treatment and it was fantastic for that individual and then turn around and get bogged down in MTAP.

These are things that we need to work on. I think we need to actually ask government to actually do the work and try to make sure that all these systems work in place, especially for people in Labrador who don't actually have – like I said, we don't have a specialist on every corner, we understand that, but we need to get people from Labrador to these individuals for the health of themselves and the community.

We see the part that we want to do this. We want to actually be able to get people to actually come and work and stuff in Labrador. The biggest hurdle that I keep hearing is that there's just no effort on affordable housing. I understand the side with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but outside of that is the market housing. I haven't seen anything from this side to actually help the municipalities put in the infrastructure to actually expand their footprint, to actually have the ability to encourage development of affordable housing in the region outside of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

The two municipalities have said to the former minister who was responsible for Housing, I think he came up the day before he was no longer minister of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, that's fine, but we've said to him and we've said to every other minister, municipalities need the ability to access funding to actually increase the footprints so they actually have water,

sewer and roads and stuff so that we can actually get housing built in places like Labrador West.

We have a challenge when it comes to getting that kind of workup done there because, we understand, it's Labrador. There is what I think everyone colloquially called – there was a commercial growing up, for Mary Browns and it used to have the price come up across the screen and they always had a little thing down at the bottom: a little more in Labrador. That's what they used; the Mary Browns' ad even used to have to say: We're going to charge you more in Labrador.

Well, that actual thing actually applies to everything in Labrador, even in the construction industry, they'll charge more in Labrador to do work. It's becoming a hinderance without the support from government to municipalities to actually get work done. We can't make housing affordable if right off the get-go there are these companies and these developers and stuff who are automatically going to throw on a Labrador tax on top of this work. It's not going to be worthwhile. Nobody is going to be able to afford the house that's going to get built.

We need to actually have government be a partner with municipalities, in a sense, to actually help increase the footprint, to actually get this water, sewer, roads and streets put in place to bring down the costing and make it an affordable investment for people to come up to Labrador and build housing.

We can't succeed as a region if this provincial government cannot be a partner in the success. We have an opportunity – a golden opportunity – in Labrador West to bring in a lot more revenue to the province, to increase our mining output, to actually be a partner in success, but we need everyone on board. That includes this provincial government, this includes the municipalities and this includes the private sector.

We want to be a crown jewel in the province. We want to be that, but unless someone actually says okay, let's do this; we can't. We're just going to sit idle in the region and just piddle away. But we want to be better. We want to actually help and be a contributor to this province, but we need government as a partner, and I'm not seeing that here today. I'm not seeing the ability to help us with the issues with the municipalities and to invest and to actually help grow Labrador West. Right now, I just see status quo and it is unfortunate.

I want nurses and doctors to look at us as an opportunity to move up to our place but where are they going to live? There is not a house to buy. There is not a house to rent. I want to fill the many, many empty roles in the public services in Labrador West, but they can't afford to move to Labrador West. I have no sheriff officers. I have no occupational health and safety officers. I'm down clerks. I'm down all kinds of different roles within the public service in Transportation and Infrastructure and everything because they can't afford to rent – not even buy. They can't afford to rent a house in Labrador West unless they're working for one of the mining companies. The salary is just not there for them to be able to actually make that.

My parents bought a house in 1988 for \$25,000; valued right now, it is almost over \$400,000 today. The person that Dad sold to a few years ago still hasn't even painted it and resold it for triple the amount that dad sold it to him for. So, you know, this is the thing that's going on up here. We want to be a partner in success, we want to help the province grow, we want to be a part of the green transition, but without actual partnership from this province to the municipalities it is just not going to happen.

We have to look at the bigger picture here. We have to look at an investment into a region like us is an investment back into the province – fair share. But unless we're going to build houses, if not – the mining

companies are going to move ahead. That's fine; they're going to do their thing. But you know what's going to happen? Labrador West is going to turn into a fly-in, fly-out mining camp. That's what's going to happen because there are just no services there. There is no ability for investment. There is no ability for any of that. We're going to just be a fly-in, fly-out camp and we're going to be more of a hinderance on the province than we're actually going to be a partner in the province, and I don't want that.

Labrador West has an opportunity to be a crown jewel in this province, but in the instance of this without partnership, without actual investment into health care and education and those kind of things to actually make sure that people want to build houses there and make sure people want to actually move up there and actually enjoy the beautiful thing that we have going on up there, we're just going to turn into a mining camp. That's what's going to happen.

We've already seen it with part of the industry. There are way too many fly-in fly-outs right now as it is. At the end of the day, we don't want the actual primary driver, the actual mining companies themselves, the operation sides of things to go fly-in, fly out. We're not that. We're a community. We're not a mining town; we're a town with a mine. That's what we are, and we want to be able to continue to be a community.

A lot of our seniors here, a lot of them are second generation seniors. Their parents came up and their parents left and so on, but they stayed and all those people are seniors now. They have their grandkids. They have their things. They're not going anywhere. They want to stay in Labrador West. They want to be able to enjoy their family that they built there, but with the lack of investment in health care, the lack of consideration for what's going on there, the lack of actual understanding of how things work there, these individuals are looking at me going, Jordan, I have these grandkids. I have these beautiful grandkids that I want to

be able to enjoy and have that, but they can't because there's no investment in health care, there's no investment into housing and there's no investment into any of that.

So what do they have to do? They have to move to a town they've never lived in their entire lives just so they can be closer to the Health Sciences Centre. A lot of them are out living here on the Northeast Avalon as miserable as all can be because their grandkids are back in Lab City. They're out here because there's no investment in the health care, there's no investment in housing, there's no investment into any of that and they're sitting out here miserable while their grandkids and their kids are up in Lab West working and not being able to enjoy the actual thing in life that they want to enjoy. They worked for 30 years. They gave up their health for the mining companies and now they have to turn around and move to Newfoundland, a place they've never been in their entire life.

This is the thing that we're facing here. We're facing the degrade of our community. We're losing the sense of community because we can't get the province on board as a partner, and that's the thing. We have an opportunity; don't squander it. You have a great thing going in Lab West, but you're going to ruin it and you're going to ruin it for everybody.

So this is what I want to talk about. We want to see investment into the municipalities so they can actually build affordable housing and they can actually get people to move up there and increase the GDP of this province but, instead, you squandered it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: Amazing how they wake up really quick, isn't it? It's all good.

It's always a pleasure to stand in this House, Madam Speaker, and speak on the budget or anything important, actually. As I drove in this morning, I was having a moment. You drive along sometimes and you think about what you've got to say and what you're going to talk about and you do this over and over again. I think I say this often. I always like to say it again. It bears repeating what a privilege it is to represent your community. Most of us represent our hometowns in the House of Assembly. Sometimes we take this for granted and we get frustrated. It's a job that you take on and how many times have I left this building and drove up Higgin's Line and questioned what have I got myself into.

But there are more days that I drive and I say what a privilege, what an honour to be able to do what you do. Because I always say every day in this job – someone asked me one time about this job. It's really a lifestyle. You're doing something to better your community and your hometown, people in your community, to better their lives. No greater privilege. Forty of us, what we take in here, we should never lose sight of that.

I know my former colleague from Cape St. Francis, he always told me – first day I sat in the House, my first swearing in was in here. I was sat in the chair. There were only seven of us on this side then. He looked at me and he said, take in the moment because you don't realize how fortunate you are to do what you're doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: So I like to remind myself, and anyone out there and anyone in here and a lot of people across the way who came in when I came in, you have a separate, different type of relationship when it comes that way. Lawyers say they went to the bar together; politicians sometimes come in the

House together. It's something that's never lost on me outside the banter we get on in the House. I never lose sight of that, and I always like to speak of it.

On that note, too, before I get into anything else I want to say, I want to congratulate, first of all, the newest Member who will be in a couple of week's time in the House of Assembly, Mr. Jim McKenna. Well done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Very big win for him. Again, he's going through probably what we all went through back when we all came in here. I want to tip my hat to him. Looking forward to working with him. I'm sure he'll be an asset to the House of Assembly.

There are probably a lot of people who don't do this, and a lot of people probably haven't experienced this. I want to also pass along my best regards to Ms. Dana Blackmore.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Because the Minister of Finance, I think she knows what I'm going to say, but I think I told her yesterday out in a side conversation that I went through in 2014 – a lot of people may know, probably people don't know. I went through a similar thing. I ran in a by-election and I lost. It was a heartbreaking; close by-election, but I lost. It was something I learned, something I took with me the rest of my life. It was one of the biggest learning moments of my life. There don't be a day go by I don't remember the feeling.

You've all been around scrums and you've all been in areas, but when you're devastated you feel like you've disappointed everyone. You've let everyone down. Your family, your party, your good friend – Terry French, we were best friends, we worked together – new premier. It was a lot of weight on me. The government opposite were on the rise and we were on the decline. When you walk in and there's a

bank of cameras in front of you and right leading off the first microphone is David Cochrane jamming it in your face and you feel like you're at the lowest point of your life.

So the other night, ironically, I was elated for Jim, I was happy for us, like you would be. But I had a moment and I said to my wife, my heart was breaking for Ms. Blackmore, so I just wanted to just acknowledge that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Kudos to her.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Madam Speaker, we talk about in the House, this is a budget debate and we can go any angle. There's so much stuff, you know, you start sometimes, where do I start? There are so many areas we could start on. I guess, one area there's a lot of conversation on and we hear it all the time, it's a big issue, as the government opposite like to say sometimes, it's a federal issue, but I think it's a national issue but it's a provincial issue, too, we can't shake it, it's the carbon tax.

Everyone out there understands the federal government, the carbon tax was initiated, it's a federal government initiative. But my argument has always been steadfast on it, I think the provincial government dropped the ball in not standing up against it from the get-go. I really, strongly believe that was the problem.

Right now, the Premier has a lot of trouble getting people on side and I think you've seen a lot of disdain, I heard a lot of it at the doors when we were in the election. Don't underestimate the voter and don't underestimate rural Newfoundland sometimes because you think this may be an urban issue, but this is affecting the entire province. People are feeling this at the gas tanks. They're feeling it in the

grocery stores. Everyone is feeling the impacts.

Whether it's a result of carbon tax, we're not sure. I'm sure it's not helping. It's a lot of factors at play, no doubt carbon tax is one of the many factors, but you can't – like I watch this over and over again, I watch the media, we all watch media. Of course, we watch our angle, we're writing letters, we're demanding First Minister's meetings. We want to get to the bottom of this issue. We're against it.

Three years ago, we stood here in this House and we debated into the night on the implementation of the carbon tax, the enacting legislation I believe it was called. We stood our ground and we said: vote against it. We called for Division. We stood up and we voted against it.

Now, the argument on the other side was we had no choice; it was the way it had to be. This was the best mechanism out there. I think ministers were getting up one after another and spewing the virtues of carbon tax. Why couldn't you stand then? My argument, and it still stands today and I said to the Premier during an exchange here the other day here in the House: Why didn't you stand with us three years ago? Where were you three years ago that you never stood with us when we got up here in the House and we asked for unanimous support?

Maybe it would have been symbolic, I'm not sure, but I guarantee you now, the Premier would have a lot more backing on the issue if he would have stood his ground three years ago when we all stood up because nobody, and I mean nobody, that I ever spoke to ever thought carbon tax was a great initiative, outside the Liberals, especially Trudeau's federal Liberals, and a lot of provincial Liberals up until recently.

That's the problem, now it's about people, you can't take someone at their word. A few years ago, it was the best thing ever, it may not be the greatest mechanism but it's the

best one until we get something better, I think was what one minister said.

I got up here in the House then and I got on like sometimes I do, it's probably getting into the wee hours of the night, the witching hour, and I went on a bit of tangent on carbon tax: Is that the biggest issue facing the province today? It's not. It's not.

Does that make me a climate denier, as they like to use. The Premier likes to always remind people: a climate denier. No, absolutely not. I got a grandson; our new grandson, he's going to grow up in this world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Which, by the way, is a great experience. I love every minute of it, on a side note, but they're going to grow up in this world. We all got families and that.

I mean, I care about the environment. We all care about the environment, but do we think taxation is the answer? No. That's what we're saying, we don't believe you can tax people into behaving differently.

So, you allot for \$6 million in your budget, and that's what your expectation was, your line budget when it was enacted – I'm in the wrong, I'm tripping ahead of myself; I'm talking about sugar tax there now. So I'll go to the sugar tax because that's what I'm going to tie it to.

You got the carbon tax and it's punitive, I call it punitive, to get you to cleaner energy, better environmentally friendly stuff, being kinder to your environment. They're going to give you a carbon off-set payment. You're going to pay out all this money on fuel, at the grocery store, you're crossing the ferry, you're getting on a plane, it's costing us a lot of money and the idea is we're going to give you an off-set payment.

So if you stop burning less emissions to be friendlier to the environment, you'll actually

make money because we're going to give you money in your pocket with these cheques. The concept just defies my logic. I can't figure it out. Yet, do you see any less trucks on the road? Do you see less of anything? Do you see less travel? It's just not sensible. We're not even equipped to do in our environment.

Then you bring us over to the sugar tax. The comparative thing is – and this has come to me, I've been thinking about this – they're similar, they're punitive, they're behavioural modification taxes, really, when you look at it, because the Premier likes to use that word behavioural modification and sugar tax.

The line item suggests it's \$6 million. Last year, it was \$16 million took in. So does that mean people are using less sugar or buying less sugary drinks? No. If that was working, that line item would be down to \$4 million or \$3 million. That would be a descending. Then I would say, okay, this is working. But that's not what's happening, it's increasing.

So what's going on is people are saying, oh, it's another tax; carbon tax, it's another tax and the burden is hitting the people in the pocketbook, which is the wrong place. It's not working. You can't tax your way to prosperity. You can't tax your way to a cleaner environment. It's not how it's done. You need to educate people. We need to come up with better technologies. But people have become more aware of their environments. You can't punish people. We have to work together; you have to find a solution for this. But taxation is not the answer.

In my mind, it's probably the laziest move any government can make, when you tax people to try to stop them. We're not talking about speeding. You're not talking about speeding on a highway. You're talking about everyday life. It affects every part of your life. It defies logic.

When I see – and I've seen this over and over again, I watch the Premier and his sleeves are rolled up and he's ready to go fighting with Ottawa, it plays well. It really does and I understand the dilemma because now you've got to do a total about-face, because for years you were – first you had your made-in-Newfoundland approach and you were collecting money in the green fund and it was tolerable. Then when you never followed through on the federal government's initiatives, they took over and they implemented carbon tax. Now, they became enemy number one.

But they became enemy number one, more so lately, because they have no friends. The federal Liberals, they're on an island by themselves. Nobody is lining up, I mean, Trudeau don't have a lot of friends anymore. The polls are showing that. It's not a bad time now to go after them. It's the lowest hanging fruit out there. I mean, he's like a pinata, because every time his name is mentioned, he's like a pinata; the man is being bet to death. I'm amazed he's still staying in the prime minister's office, to be quite frank with you. I can't believe it. How the federal party, the Liberal party who was always a strong operation, how they've kept the man there.

So right now is not a bad play to go after him. In the eyes of most Canadians, not only Newfoundlanders, Canadians, you look like a champion. You can't miss on that issue. But when I look at morals and when you stand your ground, you do it in face of adversity. Why didn't this happen three years ago when he wasn't the pinata? When he wasn't getting bet to death.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: That's what would stand out more, because then the Premier would be doing it and the government would be doing it for the people of the province. That would have been true leadership. Right now, all this is a political game, to save your own face, because right now the federal Liberals

are in big trouble and the carbon tax is killing them across this country. The damage is irreparable.

Whether you like Pierre Poilievre or the federal Conservatives, that's another debate for another day. Polls don't lie. They're a mile ahead and the federal Liberals are sticking to their guns on the carbon tax. They believe – they're boxed in and they can't turn back and now, all of a sudden – the only Liberal government in the country – the revelation is hang on, we can't be in favour of that. That's a death sentence to us. We can't do that, but it's too late.

Last week, in the media, a question came up and it was on this issue and I was asked to respond. I mean, it didn't take me much to respond. The Premier was all over it. He was writing letters and demanding meetings and whatnot. My question was: Where were you three years ago? That's all that really needed to be said. It wasn't cool enough to be on the outs with the Liberals three years ago, but now it is.

You've got a provincial party who changed their signs – changed the colours of signs. I've said this before, actually, one of the first times I spoke in the House. My grandparents were some of the biggest Liberals that you'll ever meet. They worshipped Joey. They were Liberals to the core. If they were to be able to come back now and go down the road during election and see some of the Liberal signs, they'd be lost. They wouldn't know what happened to the Liberal Party, because you don't see anything. It's on the bottom corner: the Liberal Party of Newfoundland.

It's laughable, right? They're ashamed to be a Liberal. You're ashamed to be a Liberal. I mean, it is a wonder they don't have red banished. I seen the Minister of Environment, yesterday or today, he wore a red tie and I said that's pretty good. I think the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, he's got a bit of a red tie on today, but it's not that common. Oh, the

Member for Mount Pearl North got a red purse. That's good. Nice to see you haven't totally abandoned the colours but now you gotten a case – and red shoes I might add. Well done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: But I make my point that we're not ashamed to be blue. There's no one on this side of the House who are ashamed to be blue. When we go down around, we wear our blue jackets in pride. Things haven't always been that great. In 2015, I ran when blue wasn't that cool, but my truck was tattered in blue and I would never sway from who we are. That's who we are. Whether you like us or not, stand your ground and be –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Even when it's not popular, why turn your back? That's the point of this matter. So when it's not cool and people thought the PCs were getting wiped off the map, here I was, a year later after I lost the by-election, I put my hand up and I ran again and my truck was covered in blue. Some people thought I was after really going over the edge, but I stuck with it, because that's about conviction and that's standing up for what you believe in and putting yourself out there. I've got a lot of people around me on this side of the House and our colleagues, we've all done that in the face of adversity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: It's not always easy to do when you're looking at government opposite and they're in the driver's seat and you're not. You've going in knowing or thinking very well if you get the chance, you are going to be in Opposition. That takes courage and I got a lot of people around me that are courageous.

It's too bad we don't see government opposite and the Premier didn't show the

same courage three years ago. Instead, now we've come into the new age now and we have the Premier's last name – because I know some of them will nitpick and say I'm going to say his name. But it's no longer the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador; it's the last name. So when he moves on, you got to create a new party. That party is gone because there's a name on the party now. It's the last name of the Premier.

So what do you have to do then? You have to rename your party? It's no longer the Liberal Party; it's his party. No one person is a party. It's not the Trudeau party; it's the Liberal Party of Canada. But here in Newfoundland, no, it's no longer the Liberal Party of Newfoundland. It's a little sign on the bottom, you can hardly read it, you need a microscope to see it on the bottom: the Liberal Party of Newfoundland. Totally, totally ashamed of who you are. It is incredible.

They don't have a red book anymore, there is a white – a little tinge. I don't know, we were looking the other day and we can't find any red lettering. I don't really know. I think there might be a few graphs in there that is a bit of red to show deficits and that, but we're not nitpicking, we're just being obvious. Where's the red? There was a time you need a pair of sunglasses when you opened the budget book because the glare – the sun would come in the through the window, the glare of the red would blind you.

In one election when the Liberals were running high, I went up one street in my district and there were that many Liberal coats, it was that much red coming at me – I think they were in red jumpsuits back then – they were coming up the street. This is a true story. Me and my former colleague from Cape St. Francis went up knocking doors in Anchorage Road and we got in and he looked at me and everyone knows – I'll say his name – Kevin quite well and Kevin says: B'y, Barry, we got to get out of here.

They were coming down over the hill and all I could see was red on both sides. Literally red pants and red coats and I was, like, oh my. I said: Yeah, Kevin, I'll take your advice and we turned around and we went to another street.

But now that don't happen. You walk up the street, you see the crowds coming, and they're wearing grey, little name on the jacket. A little bit of white around the sign. So you're over and actually some people I think wonder: Is this not an independent? Are the independents running against the Tories and the NDP? We got no Liberals. The Liberals are gone; they've left the building. So it is no longer cool to be a Liberal in Newfoundland and Labrador. No, no, no; you can't be Liberal in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I got a lot more to say, Speaker. I didn't know if I had the energy, but it seems like it just grows. There are a lot of angles you could go on.

Anyway, there's a bit of banter on that issue. But the moral of my story is people are not pleased in Newfoundland and Labrador today. Simple.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: The Premier said in his scrum in his analogy of what happened and winning the by-election, people are frustrated. Pure and simple; they're frustrated. It's not just the carbon tax, it's not the fishery, in general. The clear message sent to this side, they like what they're doing; to that side, they don't like what you're doing. People can argue that all day long, but 3,300 people in Fogo Island - Cape Freels stated what I'm saying now and I think it's time for everyone to pay attention to that and we'll keep doing what we're doing.

On that note, Speaker, my time winds down, I went to present this as a non-confidence amendment.

I move an amendment, seconded by the Member for Terra Nova, that all the words after the word "That" be deleted in the motion before the House, Motion 1, and the following words be substituted: this House faults the Liberal government for missing the mark for seniors; missing the mark for students, teachers and children; missing the mark on health care; missing the mark for persons with disabilities; missing the mark for Labradorians; missing the mark in the fisheries; missing the mark for businesses wrapped in red tape; and missing the mark for everyone struggling to make ends meet while paying their high taxes.

SPEAKER (Bennett): This House will stand recessed while we take time to review the proposed amendment.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

Upon review of the proposed amendment, I do find that the amendment is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to get up again and, I guess, continue on. Before I do, though, my colleague from Ferryland pointed out something. I congratulated the candidates in the Fogo Island - Cape Freels by-election and I missed, actually, to congratulate Mr. Jim Gill, the NDP who also ran in it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Well done.

Anyone who puts their name on a ballot is a brave person. Not everyone got the courage to do it and people don't realize what it's like

sometimes, but you always remember the first time you saw your own name on a sign or a brochure or your picture up on the news, it was one of them moments. We forget about it as the years go on, but the first time you see your first election sign, I'll say it again: What have I got myself into? I say that a lot of days.

Speaker, I got a lot of issues on the budget and that. In my own district, there are a couple of issues when the budget was announced, and it was a lot of tense times then with the protest. It was a weird budget. It was announced and we never really had time to process it. We watched it from afar, based on the situation that was happening outside the building.

But there were two things that really, I guess, when I say it annoyed me or it frustrated me, I say that collectively for my district. Because a new school in Foxtrap for me, personally, will probably not make a huge amount of difference. It probably will make a difference for a lot of families, there's no doubt, a lot of families in the district, but me, my children are raised. Our grandson, right now, is in Mount Pearl.

P. LANE: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I'm hoping to get him back to CBS. For right now, he lives in Mount Pearl North, but my plan is to get him back to CBS. Rest assured, by the time he's 18, I'm hoping he'll be in CBS, but anyway.

When the budget was announced and anyone that was around and listened to me – and I know that the guy on VOXM, the guy Dave who does the calls for VOXM, sadly, he knows my number off by heart when I call in. I said: I got a problem. I've been leery of calling in. I said: My God, if you know my number off by heart. But one day he said: You're calling about Frank Roberts, aren't you?

When he said it, it was one of them moments, I said it's very interesting, of all of

the issues I talk about and I talk about a lot of issues, he tied me – and I called *Open Line* on lots of other topics of the day in your role, I mean that comes with the territory, that's the one that was obviously resonating with him. I'm not a psychic, but, obviously, he associated me with the Frank Roberts issue because it resonated with him.

Ironically, that resonated with a lot of people in my community, which it became a huge issue for me, personally. Because I don't go to that school. My children went there. That was my high school. I'm not in that school every day and last year when those issues were brought to light, the protests were held, I did tours of the school; I met with the school council; I met with the parent groups; I met with teachers. It was disturbing. I seen the buckets in the hall. I seen hoses running from the ceiling catching water that was there for seven or eight years. I seen a classroom which was cut in half and half of that classroom had a few vending machines in it and the other half was a half a classroom.

There are 650 students in that school, young adults. This is junior high school. They're young adults in that school. I witnessed there are plumbing problems. I witnessed there are heating problems. I witnessed screens on the windows were missing. There were ventilation issues. The list went on and on.

If anyone don't know me well enough by now, I'm not one of those people that's a million miles up in the sky, I'm boots on the ground. I know the cleaners. I know the teachers. I know the boys that goes up and works for the school district and fixes the doors. It just comes with someone who has lived in the community all their life. I know this community –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: – and the community knows me.

They know that I go to Tim Hortons. I go to Sobeys. I go to Dominion, sometimes – I'll relapse a bit, anyone remember the *King of Kensington*, the show? He used to walk down the streets sometimes. He was in his own town and he was walking down and saying hello to everyone, waving.

There are parts of my communities like that. I'm sure we all got it in our community, we walk down – I feel sometimes – it's kind of funny but you're going down, you spend your time waving and talking. Anyway, it's one of those notes, but in the supermarket, they're asking me: Are we getting a new school? B'y that's shocking, what a state of the school. B'y isn't that terrible, rodents up in the school. Isn't that terrible about the ventilation? What our children have to go through. I can't agree with them more because I witness it, I went through it, I seen it first-hand and I found it very disturbing.

I give credit where credit is due, the current Minister of Health, when he was Minister of Education, toured the building with me. We had a great tour. He acknowledged there are problems. He committed to trying to bring in a portable, I believe, and acknowledged we needed to do something about a cafeteria space, get some immediate action on the school. But he acknowledged – it was an acknowledgement that, you know, I'm not pretending, the teachers are not pretending. We're not pretending. We're not faking. This is actually real. It's real.

It was there and he witnessed it. I give credit and I thanked him. I thanked him many times, publicly, on that and I'll thank him again because that's what I expect I should do. If I'm a minister in the same role and a Member of this House of Assembly comes and wants some help, we can have all the banter in the House, we can have all the back and forth in the House, that comes with the territory, but I do appreciate the respect shown to come up and listen to the

concerns and view it first-hand and acknowledge we've got a problem.

Now, the current Minister of Municipal Affairs, we never really had that rapport in the few short months he was the Minister of Education because he went up and supposedly did a walk-through. The school was second to none, best kind. There were no issues up there. I was imagining it. I was fear mongering. I was out to lunch; how foolish was I. I could go on, but I wouldn't want to waste my time much longer going on because it's not going to solve anything.

AN HON. MEMBER: Rats were mice.

B. PETTEN: And rats were mice and mice were shrews. I magnified everything. There were rats as big as cats, but they were really only the size of a mole, but that's not going to get me anywhere.

The current Minister of Education, again, very receptive; comes up, done the tour with me; great visit, walked through. This was in the school. I've got to put this in context. This was September. They spent three months, the better part of two, 2½ months, they scoured the school. I think her words were they did a triple cleaning of the school. The school was scoured. Everything was moved. There were tiles fixed. The buckets – these unsightly things were fixed. There was painting done. The floors were waxed. They were re-waxed. The school has never been that clean, ever. Cleanliness second to none. It was spotless.

She come up. She done a tour of the school with me; walks through it; had a look around; acknowledged: not adequate. One word. One statement. There's no secret. I've said it here. You don't even have a cafeteria. These people don't even have a cafeteria.

To put it in context, Frank Roberts is on the Foxtrap Access Road. There's nothing around it. So unless you've got a vehicle, which in junior high you don't have a

vehicle; if you go off site, you're on the side of the Trans-Canada, literally. You can't walk to a store. You can't go to the pizza place or a lot of places associated or a Tim Horton's to get a sandwich. You're trapped. You're there.

So to put in perspective, you've got a room that's, literally, I would say it's 12 by 12 by 12, that's the cafeteria. They can't eat in there, but now they've expanded that room, they've opened it up. It's a classroom. That's all they've got for 650 students. That's almost a form of punishment.

I talked to those parents – I'm ad nauseum talking about it. I've been on the media talking about it. As I said, the guy at VOXM he associated me calling about Frank Roberts because, do you know what? That stuck with me. I'll tell you why it stuck with me because my message, obviously, on that issue resonated with him. He shook his head in disbelief.

The Minister of Education also agreed and full on, I thanked her for being frank with me and honest. The school is in desperate shape. We'll see now what's going on and we're well aware. I kept the issue up. It's not like I never. I kept regular emails reminding her. She could have turned it into whatever announcement she wanted to, to say it was on a list, it was whatever. Even if you do the way they do things and not invite us to even be a part of it, that's fine. It's about the people in my district.

I'm not going to be there forever, but I've got a community that's at 28,000 people, with a catchment area that is growing leaps and bounds. That's in one of the largest catchment areas in the community. It's right in the heart of my community. It's the largest catchment area in the community and the school is not adequate. It's not the matter that it's in a Liberal – you know, you go to a Liberal district or an NDP district, if the school is not adequate, it's not adequate. Simple, full stop.

So we have those conversations and you do things the right way. You bring us these issues. You speak out on those issues. Different ministers go in and review it. You're pleading with government. It's what we do, sometimes, what we have to subject ourselves to, cap in hand, go in and try to get something for your community.

Then when the budget comes down and there's not a mention, not a word. It's insulting to the people of CBS. Actually, a lot of them people, a good few of the people, probably used to vote Liberal. They remember. They're taxpayers. It is their money. They own that money just like anyone else here. We all own a share of the pot. They've got every right to demand a new school. Why shouldn't they? Why shouldn't their children have the right to go to a school that's clean and meets the needs of their children any more than anywhere else? Why should you have to be in a Liberal district to get that? What makes the children at Frank Roberts in Foxtrap any different than the ones in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's? What makes them any different from the ones out in Kenmount Terrace? What makes them any different?

They announced a new school in Paradise. I had people up in my district saying, oh yes, they've got one down in Paradise. I said, yes and so they should, because that was promised back in 2015. It should be there. It should never have been took off the books. It was took off the books because the government changed. It was a Tory down there. That's what happened.

So why should the people of Paradise be punished because it's not a Liberal district? No more why should the people of CBS be punished because it's not a Liberal district. This is the people's money. It's public money. So when the budget come out – and I point across to my colleague from Topsail - Paradise there who has advocated long and hard for that school. They put \$50,000 in the budget – \$50,000. Sure, you can't even pay for photocopying for \$50,000 in this day and

age. So what's that? To get you peace? To keep the school advocacy group at bay? Mr. Speaker, \$50,000, it's insulting. It is absolutely insulting.

You go down and you argue, you bring it up to the minister, and you express your disappointment and what do you get back? Crickets. As a matter of fact, there are a few times you get these little comments or remarks back and it's almost like a smug remark or a confident remark, but it's fine when you're on government's side. It is fine when you're on the right team; you don't really care. Like, what does it mean to you.

So what does it mean to them over there to be looking after a Tory or an NDP or an independent? It means nothing. But if you cared, and I mean truly cared about what you're put here for – because we're supposed to be here to improve the lives of the people we represent. And 40 of us should be trying to improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and not the Liberal district you represent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: My constituents matter. My colleague for Topsail - Paradise constituents matter. Our leader for Stephenville - Port au Port, his constituents matter. I can go right around our caucus; every one of our constituents matter just as much as the constituents of the government side. And every one of them have an equal share and an equal right to that Treasury of almost \$10 billion. It is our money. We say sometimes this is the people's House. We're put here, in our desk here, by them people to voice their interests to the floor of this House of Assembly. That's the whole premise of this Legislature.

This is not the Liberal's Legislature. This is not government's – I shouldn't even say this is not government's Legislature because if we were on the other side, we should not be in that control situation either. I have been here long enough to know and I've been

here even before I got elected oh yeah, they done that; the other crowd done that; they done that. That means nothing to me.

My colleague for Ferryland, yesterday, he made a point, if they were in government, these announcements that are happening, I'd invite them. I'd invite them to the announcements. It doesn't matter who was the Member; if you were a minister, you're in government, invite the local Member to the announcement. I think that's where we need to be.

We get back to Fogo Island - Cape Freels – and it just came to my mind as I'm saying it – when the former Member and a friend of all of ours in the House here – mine included – was minister, he was doing an announcement in CBS and the first person he called was me and he also told me and you're going to get a chance to speak. He said: My crowd mightn't agree, but you're getting a chance to speak. He said: They voted for you, not me. And I thought that was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I've told that story before he ever got sick and I always reminded him of it and I complimented with credit. Credit where credit is due, and it was something that I've never forgot. I said, well, good on you, because that told me a little bit of what this man was about, and I really respected that. He followed through on his word. He went up and we cut a ribbon and he let me cut the ribbon. So what can I say? I would like to be able to do the same thing, if I was ever on that side, I'd do the same thing for Members opposite because you know what –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: – the public appreciate that. The public get that and by not doing that sometimes – if I'm not at an announcement in my district, it doesn't play well by not being invited, because the people see it.

How come you weren't there? I wasn't invited. They're disgusted by it.

So that's just a note to anyone that do that – some do and some don't, but I just wanted to follow up my colleague from Ferryland, he made a really great point on that. I think that makes us look better. It makes us look better as people, and that's where we need to be.

Again, I might digress because I've got time. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, on his Facebook site, he congratulated our newest Member, Jim McKenna. That's fine. I mean, he's an independent. He's not affiliated with any of us. The first comment under it was: I love this. Do you know what? That's really, truly, the majority of the people – they know we're Liberal and PC and NDP and they have their own leanings. People like that.

They like to see an NDP or a PC and a Liberal out conversing. They like to know that you're human, that you can actually interact and you're respectful to each other. Because sometimes the House of Assembly is not always what people think it is. But we have a job to do and the job to do is what we do here every day in this House – it's a long day sometimes. People don't realize what we're at behind the scenes, but your ultimate goal is the people you represent and, collectively, we represent the entire province.

So ultimately whatever we do and we might look, you're doing a message, you might be on the phone call and people might pass by and think you're talking to your friend, but little do they know you're talking to a family that's in crisis, trying to get their mom or dad in a home, or they're dealing with home care issues or their dealing with health care issues and you're doing your best to listen to them. You may not be able to fix the problem, but you're doing your best to listen, hear them out and do what you can. Even words of comfort sometimes.

I think sometimes our job, as MHAs, we become counsellors more than MHAs sometimes, because people want someone to listen to their problem. You may not fix it. You may tell them upfront you can't fix it, but when you listen to their problem, you read their email and you respond to their email, I'm sure a lot of people can attest to this, people respect that and appreciate it and they'll come back to you, at least you tried. At least you responded or thank you for responding. That matters and is everything in this world. It's something that I learned a long time ago as well. Always respond to people and be respectful and it will never fail you. You'll never go wrong. You'll never fix everyone's problems. Don't think you can, but that little bit of whatever, that goes a million miles and people will always be eternally grateful.

I have people that they've called me several times, I've never been able to help them. I knock on their door and, without hesitation, they're fully supportive, not because I solved anything or done anything for them, but because I listened and I tried. That's all people really want. They want you to try. They'll punish you for not responding or doing nothing, but they'll never punish you if they know you tried. That's all we do. That's all we all do in this House every day – we try. Whoever gave me this water, I want to thank them, too.

To get back to Frank Roberts – I'm trying. The school in Mobile – the Member for Ferryland is trying. The school in Paradise – the Member for Topsail - Paradise is trying. He got further than I got or the Member for Ferryland, but we try. We're not magicians. It's not magic. We try. Really and truly, I believe we do it for the right reasons. I think you need to come into this Legislature with the mindset that we're doing it for the right reason and I truly believe the majority do that for the right reason.

You can get lost sometimes in the partisan shots and the foolishness that goes on. No one party or the one person or one group of

people owns that \$10-billion budget. They're responsible for the expenditure of it, but we're also responsible for keeping government into account. That's something that we take quite serious and we continue on.

So part two with the budget that really irritated me was Family Care Teams. Again, CBS, a community of 28,000 people, has no public transportation. People say you're in the metro area. I argue that because we're more rural than most anywhere else. I think the metro area stops in Paradise to be quite honest with you. When you get up around Kelligrews, Upper Gullies, parts of Foxtrap, you're no longer metro. You're urban. I mean, my community is vastly urban. It's fish markets. It's agriculture. Even though I'm 25 minutes away, it makes the lure of being in St. John's coming out and buying a home in the backyard with the fields in the back of you. That's what CBS really is and most of my community is. I love it and that's probably why we all love it so much. That's why everybody else wants to come out there.

The barrier I'm separated by: I have no public transportation. People cannot get to the Health Science. They cannot get to St. Clare's. They cannot get to any of the major health centres in the city because they have no way there, unless you have a family member or you get a cab. That's the only way of getting there so I'm no different than anywhere on the outskirts. There's no Metrobus. There's nothing so that's a big barrier.

There are a few private blood collection clinics up there, that's it. I've pleaded. I've argued. I've spoken about this as well on many, many occasions. I was talking to the current minister and expressed to him. I know when the Health Accord was in its stages, I talked to them and we met with them, me and my colleague from Harbour Main had several meetings. It's not lost on anyone. It should never be lost on anyone the argument, the need: big family doctor

shortage, major clinic closed up a few years ago, doctors dispersed to St. John's. There are barriers that exist there from getting adequate health care.

So I'm led to believe or I'm hopeful that there would be something in the budget last year: no; maybe next year: no. I even had a meeting with the council up there and they were all very hopeful that something was going to come down the chute for CBS in the form of a Family Care Team. But did that happen? No. Two went out to the Baie Verte - Green Bay District, which is a by-election on the route. Another one went down to Portugal Cove-St. Phillip's, which was part of the one pork-barrel election promises during that by-election. But that one kind of caught me off guard, because I don't know where that was to, because the former Member argued against that. That was not even nowhere near on the table. Maybe it might have been like the school, I'm not sure. But people in CBS, no mention, forget you.

Would that have happened if I was a Liberal Member up there? Probably not. Or if there was a by-election? Definitely not. I'd say if there was a by-election there – maybe that's an option, I'll figure that out down the road. I'm not ready yet, but maybe a by-election might be the answer to getting a new school and a family care centre in CBS. So there you go, right.

I'm not ready yet, I tell Members opposite, don't get too excited, I'm not going anywhere yet. But the moral of my story is, this should not be the way we govern. This should not be the way we govern this province. It's insulting.

My wife wouldn't be too pleased even mentioning her, because any of you that have spouses in politics, it's kind of one of them topics that you don't really talk about a lot or they don't want to talk to you about it a lot or we just kind of agree not to talk about it at all. But there a while ago, she was watching on Facebook, she said: Why are

they doing these announcements during a by-election? That's not right. I kid you not, she's saying this truly and innocently and it's sincerely. It's in her own mind, because I follow her. She's my soundboard for a lot of things believe me, I'm sure we all do the same thing. She brings me really right back to my feet. I'm flat on the ground. I'll never be no eagle. There's no problem for me getting through doorways up in my place. Her and my two daughters got me well in check, so no problem. I said, you know, that's a good point. It's a really good point. You're right what you're saying.

Again, I'll give credit again – I'm crediting a lot of people here this morning – to the Mount Pearl - Southlands MHA, he spoke up after the Conception Bay East - Bell Island by-election and he said it was an unfair advantage from what's being done. And do you know what? It was a very good point he made. It was one that was not lost on me; I thought about it, too.

You're the Premier and you're landing on someone's doorstep and you're promising a school or you're promising a shore-based manager or you're promising them a family care centre or you're promising them pavement.

How many people in the province has the Premier of the province showed up on their doorstep? Not a lot. That's powerful. Whether you're a Liberal or a PC or whatever you are, the Premier showing up on your doorstep means something. They're looking at you and for your vote for the Member and you're promising stuff like that. That's pretty powerful.

Now, we can show up and our leader can promise we'll do what we can if we get elected, if we get in government we'll look at that, but it doesn't have the same – to a voter, they're respectful of you and they may very well vote for you, but they don't have the same impact.

Then the election is done, then they start ticking the boxes, the election promises. Okay, move on, we got that one stowed away. Let's go out to Fogo Island - Cape Freels now, we're going to put an extension on the hospital on Fogo; we're going to put a doctor on Change Islands and we're going to rotate him between Fogo and Change Islands; we're going to get some bunker gear for Stoneville fire department. This is all done on the backdrop of photos. Never forget the photo op. Never forget the glossy photo. They're all there and they're all happy. They're all waving and their fists are in the air and the piece of paper for the bunker gear. The mayor for Fogo Island is out praising them up and the Premier: we got to vote Liberal, we got to vote for the Member out there because we're getting an extension to our hospital. Unbelievable. Incredible. Absolutely incredible.

I ran in CBS now for four elections. My predecessors ran in many elections and I ran their elections behind them. I was the campaign manager before I became the candidate. We never had any municipal official ever do that. Think about that. Now, I'm talking about my community, other communities may be different. Never have they done it.

Can I pick if I know they're Liberal or not? I can go right through that council and tell you where they all marks their X, but not one of them have ever come out publicly or put their name on a piece of brochure supporting me or any of my opponents, nor have I ever gotten involved in their elections. It is a respectful thing and it is the way it should be. That is the way democracy is supposed to work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: We get down in Bell Island, Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, we're in a tight election. We knew we were up – we're not totally oblivious to the backdrop. It's the Premier's district. He lives there. The current Member who got elected there was

a well-known person. In people's living rooms for 20-odd years. From his own town – he's from there, very formidable. We got that. We had a good candidate as well.

We worked hard, so did they and that's what campaigns are all about. Knock on the doors, get out in the cold weather. I seen the newest Member out a few days when we drove by, there were a few cold days, on Neary's Pond Road, I believe, was one day and I wondered again, what have I got myself into but I was knocking on a lot of doors. I seen them out knocking on doors and it was cold, but I respected what you were doing, because I was there and I was helping out. I know what it was like. That's how you win elections and the proof is there; he's here today.

But when I see a brochure and the mayor of Paradise, the mayor of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, the mayor of Bell Island who used to make phone calls for me, when we were in government – think about that for a second – all endorsing the Liberal candidate. The Premier over there, every second day, knocking on doors. How can you really and truly – how unfair is that? You talk about mudding the field. How unfair is that?

I would question why would you allow that to be put in your brochure? If you truly want to go in there and even the playing field and you want to go in there head-to-head, that's an unfair advantage. It should never be – never be. So now the mayor of Fogo Island is going to have to talk to our newest Member. I'd like to be a fly on the wall in that conversation. It just makes no sense.

My advice to any municipal person out there, if they want to quote me for it, stand aside, let the election unfold, because you have to work with these people. That will be an irritant for any Member out there that's running and that happens.

Now, is this a new thing that's happening? Is this a new way that this – I'm not sure. I

can't say what party the government are now because I can't use names, but it's that crowd with the grey signs is all I can tell you.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: Yeah, the pork-barrel party, grey backdrop, little white sign. Where have all the Liberals gone? I guess that should be the one: Where have all the Liberals gone? They were so proud. They were, arguably.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Little do anyone know, back in my previous life, I done accounting. I've actually done marketing. Do you know what? I done marketing and when I was in my schooling doing marketing, do you know what they considered to be one of the top branding in the country? One of the top brands that people related to in the country, do you know what it was? It was the Liberal Party.

Go into a marketing course, trust me – and it's not now because that's gone. That's gone down the shredder. The Liberal Party was one of the examples used by one of our professors; that's branding. It was simple. It was red. It was Liberal but everyone knew what it was. That "L" on a red – if you went around to a group of people with that red sign with just "L" on it, the majority of them people knew what that stood for. That's a true story.

Now we get a grey sign with a white boundary, and it's got these letters on it – it's F-U-R-E-Y. I'm not allowed to say the name, but I can spell it, I guess. F-U-R-E-Y – so when F-U-R-E-Y leaves, we've got to find a new party. So then the new name will become the new party. We got an ever-changing parties. We've got a two-party system, but we've got a party that really don't know who they are anymore. They're ashamed to be a Liberal. When he leaves, they can't be F-U-R-E-Y anymore. So they

don't know who they are. It's an identity crisis, Mr. Speaker.

We all went through that one time. In adolescence, you go through an identity crisis. They're going through it now. They've been around forever. One of the best, well-known brandings in the world, in the country, but you're ashamed to be who you are because you're not pleased with what you've done over the years. So now, all of a sudden, we can't be Liberal no more. We don't like Trudeau no more. We can't talk to them. Oh, everything is bad Liberal. But unless you –

AN HON. MEMBER: I agree with that.

B. PETTEN: Actually, there are certain things in life we agree on and, actually, we both agree on that. We actually are in agreement with our views of the federal Liberals, but you can't separate that now. You can't deny who you are. All of a sudden, you can't say they're no longer my mother, my father, my brother or my sister. You just can't do that. You can't divorce yourself from – that's who you are – but you can go in disguise.

I kid you not. Those grey signs with the white trim and F-U-R-E-Y, pull back the layer and I hazard to guess you'll see a lot of familiar faces behind it that, looking across the way now, that used to be Liberals. When you open the door, guess what? That's what you're going to see. Right now, keep the door shut, run for cover, keep your head down – that's all you've got to do. Try to weather through this and hopefully we get through another election.

Boy, I don't know anymore. The other night I wouldn't have said – I didn't think the margin was going to be what it was. I knew there was a lot of distrust. I knew people were frustrated out there and there were actually some Liberals looking for the red signs, because we went out and a few people said, sure, they don't even –

AN HON. MEMBER: They don't have a candidate.

B. PETTEN: They don't have a candidate out here. They don't have signs, what's that?

We told them who the candidate was. They didn't have a sign. But by the sheer volume of voters and by the margin, that speaks so much. So, I guess, maybe they need to do another revamp, because their grey signs with the white trim is not working. I mean, they probably should do another revamp.

I personally think it would be probably worthy for them to go into a bit of a witness protection program, for the short term. Emerge when things settle down a bit more, maybe if Trudeau decides to move on, but right now it's not a good time to be a Liberal. You can write letters, you can ask for First Ministers' meetings, you can do all you want to do, but you're not going to erase who you are.

You can't run. You can run but you can't hide. They're trying to hide, they're trying to run, but we all know what's behind that grey sign. It's the same ole, same ole. We see it. We see it every day. We see it in the House. We see it in reactions. We see what they're doing and no one is really buying this.

I get up here and we talk about health care is a huge issue in the province. We got up day after day – I know myself and our leader here, we talk about issues of importance. Probably one of the issues now that we've been debating a lot here in the House is the travel nurse fiasco, is what it is. But am I saying, when I ask the questions, the minister probably did something wrong or is a bad person? No.

What I'm asking is, there are questions we need asked and answers to and we're not getting them. You're asking about where did the \$80 million go? Well, that went to many agencies. How come the Comptroller

General – where’s the report? They wanted to know something yesterday. Now we told them we’re going to do that. Now they want the Auditor General and now it’s gone to the Auditor General, so what are you looking for? It’s always like trying to play on words. What did you ask for? All we asked for was an answer. But that is so hard to get in this Legislature.

As a matter of fact, yesterday the Premier stood up twice. I was really surprised. He stood up once and he said he was unaware of a situation, and we took him at his word. I think he was unaware of the chemo nurses getting different pay. At the end of it, he was concerned about where the money went and he wants to know where the money went. But this travel nurse issue, the problem you have – and I get back to some of the stuff being a Liberal and being ashamed to be Liberal and that – is you can’t investigate yourself.

So, again, I’ll come back to the reality of when you walk the streets, when you go into the communities. I go down to Tim Hortons – and I said this in here many times before – and the locals are there, and what do they bring up to you? They bring up the regular stuff. They said: Well, what’s the Premier saying now? Getting the minister to do an investigation, sure, that’s the foolish talk about. I said: Well, exactly, that’s what I’m saying.

But it seems like no one else is listening. I’m really concerned. I’ve asked the minister to investigate me and him. That’s what he is saying indirectly. I’ve asked the minister to do an investigation on myself and him. Now, that is the heights of – I don’t know – I’ll say hypocrisy. I don’t know what it is the heights of – it is silliness.

No, you call in the AG and you ask the AG to make this a priority and get this investigation done here and now. Not in 18 months; here and now. Like air fryers and accommodations and the list goes on. I mean, fill in the blanks, we have situations

of families being flown here for Christmas, on and on and on and on. This is our money. What about the meal per diem? The list goes on and on and on. We’re not getting any answers. But the Premier asked the minister to get someone to investigate.

We find out yesterday the Comptroller General was at it for a month or two maybe and now they’re going to get the AG to look into it. Sure, we asked for that in the beginning. But through a round of questions yesterday – I’m up to 22, and I used to have a counter for Muskrat Falls references. I can’t remember. I had it somewhere in my binder. I used to look at the ticker – yeah, it’s my ticker there; look, I got a lot of ticks. But I’d say I’m up 50 or 60 and I stopped at it; I stopped ticking off the Muskrat Falls references. But now the new one is operational – operational. Don’t ask me, I’m only the Minister of Health; that’s operational.

So who is responsible for the health care budget? The Minister of Health. Okay. Who runs NL Health Services? Mr. David Diamond, who is a great guy and soon retiring and I commend him. Okay, can you answer us, Minister, you’re responsible for the four point some-odd billion-dollar budget; what about this? No, that’s operational; I’ll give you David Diamond’s number. I’m not answering it. That’s very comforting – very, very comforting.

So I guess every department, is that the new age for this F-U-R-E-Y government? Is that the new way of doing business? We’ll pass it off to officials or we’ll hide behind – now, they’re bringing stuff into government so they’re not going to be able to hide behind CEOs of boards much longer.

People want answers. They want the facts. You’re not always afraid – you’re more annoyed by not getting an answer than getting some of this smoke and mirrors stuff. People just want the truth. As the movie goes, the saying goes: You can’t handle the truth. But people would

appreciate you being upfront with them. Nothing more annoying – and I've seen all colours in this House come in here and stand up and talk in circles and think they're being smart. Trying to avoid issues; trying to get around issues. But as you're starting to see lately and it's starting to become more reality, people are not buying it anymore. People are not bought into this stuff anymore. People are seeing through this stuff. People know what's happening. They know this is not right. We have a very smart electorate. I've stood in my place over and over again and many, many, many, many times and I say the same thing: It's annoying to the people; it's frustrating.

People just want the answer. You ask a question. The Member for Ferryland – he's always been really frank about it. He said: Why don't they just answer my question? You ask a question, why don't they just answer me? When he says it, he's sincere when he does say it because what he says and what he means: Answer my question. That's not so hard a thing to do. I guarantee you, you carry a lot more favour in the public. People see through it, Speaker. People are seeing through this over and over again. It's getting old.

Actually, it's affecting politics in general because people want you to be honest with them. They want you to tell the truth. It may not be what they want to hear but tell them that – it's full transparency; it's a full, unobstructed view; this is what we're doing and this is how we do it. In all sincerity, that is the way I operate and sometimes – well, I should say, for the most part, it don't get me in that much trouble. Some people may not like what I say. Some people may grin. I am honest with them.

A lady called me – and we all have, in our municipalities, issue with councils because a lot of our issues come from municipal. A lot of the issues, I get frustrated myself trying to deal with council because it gets caught up in the quagmire of things. She called me about snow clearing. Her road

wasn't cleared. I said: I can't answer that, that's municipal. But my sweet God, you must have some pull down there, do you? I said: Yes, I've got a lot. I said: Actually, my buddy is the superintendent. I'll call him and see if he'll plow your road. I said, but in saying that, they've been up my way three times. I happen to live on the next street across from her.

The next thing, within an hour, my phone was lit up by the mayor or the ward councillor and a councillor at large – will you stop telling this lady that your road has been done three times and hers hasn't been done once? Sometimes you'll make your little dig, but I said I can't deal with council no more than you, but sometimes, I guess, your words go further than you wish.

Anyway, the bottom line was she did get her road plowed. It was a bit later than normal, but do you know what? All that moral of what I was telling, because I found it really funny when I got the mayor calling me and we were laughing but he was making a dig at me. Her only comment to everyone out there was: The only person who called me and listened to my concerns – she was really frustrated – was the MHA who really never had no real skin in the game, but he listened to me. I think that's the lesson that we all should take whenever we do stuff because I was listening to her –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: – and I was snowed – I wasn't totally snowed in because my street was plowed, but my driveway was full. I was like, I can't do nothing no more than you can, other than the fact I did reach out to a good friend of mine who was actually down there. No one could understand why the street wasn't plowed, mind you, but he apologized. They went and plowed the street.

I didn't do anything magical no more than I would call them, this morning, there's no water and half of CBS is up there without water. I reached out again this morning:

What's your timeline? There was another pipe cracked so that's another delay.

But it was interesting, this lady, out of all of her frustration and everything was said and done, at least I listened to her. That reminds you every time you do that, that reminds you what we're here for, what our jobs are really meant to be, not what we want them to be, not what we envision. Because I'm telling you there's nothing more humbling to walk a street and your ankles in water, froze to the bone, soaked to the bone, brochures in your pockets so they are not getting wet, trying to keep a good one to get to the door and knocking on someone's door and they come out and they got no more interest in talking to you than they do flying a spaceship, and asking them for their vote.

I always said it was one of the most humbling things I've ever done. I still feel that way. It's on the ground as on the ground it can get. Everyone thinks it's the prestige, it's the honour – it is an honour to be here, but all thinks it's the prestige and that, but when you're on the ground and you're knocking doors day in and day out, daylight till dark, trying to get the vote out, trying to get your signs up, trying to win an election; you're tired, you're cold, you're wore out, but it almost all done – most everyone after an election, your hoarse, you lost weight, you're exhausted, mentally, physically exhausted, it's one of the most humbling things you'll ever do in your life. It has to be one of the most humbling things.

So it makes you wonder sometimes, why do we do this? But that's why we do it. At the end of the day, that's why we do it. The last election, we were going around taking pictures of people's driver's licence, in the mail-in ballot fiasco. Pictures of driver's licences, through the window – their licence in the window and you go up and take the card, what a prestigious job. You're up with your phone, snap, snap, snap and you're going in and you're trying to give them their ballots. That's what you were doing to try to get back in here to represent those people.

You got to love what you're at. You got to believe in what you're at. Who would ever do that? Who would ever do what we do sometimes for a job interview? Sometimes out there, you know, we get ridiculed, we get talked about and I say this in generalities of the House here, who would ever do what we do, just to get here? I'm sure that our new colleague, Mr. McKenna, is probably down there now, because I think he's suffering a bit of a flu and that. I'd say he's exhausted because it's post-election syndrome, they call it. Two or three weeks after an election, you hit a wall and you're drained. You're exhausted for a week and you're trying to get your energy back.

But you do it because you believe in what you're doing. You want to do better in your community. You want to come in here and address the issues. You want a new school for your district because your other school is run down, it's wore out. You want health care facilities for your district because people deserve it, it's 28,000 people. You want schools in Paradise. You want schools in Mobile.

We know there's a budget, we know there are cost involved, but we fight for that because we believe – that's what we're here for. We know that you can't do it all in one day, but you can do it if you listen and you respect what people have to say. Because when I speak here, like I say a lot of times, it's not me speaking, it's the people that I represent, it's their issues.

I know sometimes government has to sit down and listen to us, speaker after speaker after speaker, speak about issues that probably they don't want to listen to, some ridicule they don't want to listen to, some they may enjoy, I'm sure, but it's not easy. It's not easy, because I was in the backrooms when the former government were there. I know, I used to be there sometimes. I know some days that it was a hard slog for some ministers to find their way to the House of Assembly. They'd be dreading: My what have I got to face today?

What's going to happen today? Or an issue was a hot issue. I remember those days. It's not easy. I know some ministers; they were under heavy scrutiny. I knew them personally, friends, they'd go in there and take a deep breath and they'd face the music. It's not easy.

I respect the fact what they have to do, but it's about respect in what we have to do, too, because there are days that I get up here, do I want to do what I'm doing in the degree I have to do it, sometimes it's a passion, the vigour. Not really. It sometimes ironic because people said to me one time: Barry's soft spoken. He's a mild personality, but I've seen him in the House and that's not the same person. I've heard him on *Open Line*, that's not the same person.

It's very interesting because, in actual fact, when I remove myself from this and I go home with my family, I am very laid back. I don't get engaged in big fanfare, big debates. I'll talk to whoever wants to talk to me but I'm more low key than anything. I like to have a chat with some people, but, overall, I don't get engaged like that.

But what I learned – and this is another thing, I'm sure other Members in this House learned this along the way – it's an out-of-body experience sometimes because sometimes it's like a den. Because when you come in here, if you don't find that courage to stand your ground and be direct and be hard on issues, be challenging, I don't know if courageous is the word, I'm not sure what the right word would be; you've got to find that within you. I found that it was something like an out-of-body experience for the most part, all of it was an out-of-body experience, but you had to find that courage to be able to bring yourself to that level because, if not, you would not be effective.

Sometimes you might have too much courage, too much vigour, too much vim, I don't know. I've had that happen to me, too. Sometimes your quick remarks, sometimes

that may not be the right word. You may have to apologize for saying a word or retract a word. That's fine, if you do it for the right reason and you have the passion. I believe as time went on, I realized that's what it becomes, a passion.

A former teacher of mine, I met him a while back, a teacher I have a lot of respect for. He's an elderly man now. He ran into me. We were serving pancakes up at the Winterfest breakfast. He came over and he was having a sidebar with me and, not that I was a bad student, actually, I had a good relationship with him and he looked at me and said: You're enjoying what you're doing. I watch you. He was very complimentary. He said: I think you found your niche. I said: B'y, it's about time, isn't it? I suppose he was waiting. I don't know what he thought I was ever going to become. I don't know what his expectations were, low or high, but, anyway, I kind of found it funny. We had a little chuckle.

His point was and what he was trying to say to me was he feels the passion. When he hears me speak, it's not that I'm being nasty. He feels that I'm being passionate. He says that comes through in what you say. I'll take that as a compliment because I just speak what I see.

I see that around this Legislature. I see it on my side, and I'm pointing back here to the benches behind me, but all my colleagues, I hear them often. They get up here, everyone has their own style. We're all, ourselves, different but everyone I hear speak, there is conviction and passion. There's water out there up to their knees and snow and water and froze because they believe in what they're fighting for. They believe in the people in their areas. They believe, it's not cliché. That's true.

Anyone that takes this on as a job, I think you're doing it for the wrong reason. You'll never be effective if you take this on to punch the clock at 8 o'clock and punching out at 4 o'clock. You're not signed up for the

right thing. It'll never work. It never has. It never will. People may try to do it but you're not going to be effective. You've got to be plugged in 24-7. You've got to be ready at the drop of a hat to go to that event 7 in the night when you're dragging yourself out the door or the phone call at 10 in the night or the Saturday morning breakfasts, the Sunday morning breakfasts or the Sunday night events. We all know what it's about and trust you me, I enjoy most of that stuff but there are a lot of times I push myself because it's like, oh my, here we go again. It's what you sign up for so it's not a job. It's not a job.

I say that because you can have all the banter in here, but I sometimes say this collectively, as a group, because I think even some people in the public don't really get what we do in here sometimes. They think it's all a bit of theatrics and everything else. There's some of that, too, but we all do it for the right reason. We've just got different ways of getting there.

We feel we got a better plan than the government got; the NDP feel they got a better plan than two of us got. That's fine. We'll agree to disagree on that, but we got to stand up for what we believe in. We got to fight with the passion and vigour.

I hear it every day when I hear people get up and they'll ask questions that's pertaining to their district. It could be their critic roles because all of us got our own shadow Cabinet roles and we take ownership of those issues. You take them on.

I'm Health, so when I'm hearing someone can't get in for a MRI, it hits home with you. You're hearing all these health care stories. I get them every day, multiple – multiple and every one of them hits home to you. You're trying to respond to them, but you also take an interest and you make it your own. That's your own conviction. Every one of us here, we do that, on top of representing the community, you're representing their needs and their issues.

No one should ever underscore the importance of that job. But I do know and I'll hear it, it's by me talking today or if I get up every day this week and talk, if I got out in front of Confederation Hill there and talk to the masses, people will never fully appreciate and never understand, and probably they don't want to understand.

But I do know that this job and what we take on, it's a very important job. We should never underestimate the importance of what we do. It affects the lives of everyone in the province. Whenever I go to doors, you equate it back to elections and someone says: I don't vote. Why don't you vote? I'll always ask: Do you mind me asking why you don't vote? I've said this before and people have witnessed it: Do you know what? I'd like you to vote for me, but, most importantly, I'd like you to go vote. I believe you should vote.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Whatever reason you got, whatever way you're disjointed, I believe you should vote.

I see sometimes that's the part we're getting, the 56 per cent coming out in support, voters I mean, that should be much higher. We should be so fortunate to live in the country we live in, in the province we live in. We should go to polls with a smile on our face.

Turn on the world news reports and you're seeing the way the rest of the world is living, look at Gaza, down there. My heavens look at Ukraine, Russia and those places, and where we're too. We're actually given an option, unlike down in Russia where Putin has put in a decided that he is going to remain president until 2027 or, I don't know, 2030. He's there forever. The legislation is he can never lose. Think about that.

They're having a protest, then they're jailed or they're probably shot for doing so. We have the opportunity to say we don't like

you or we don't like you, we want a change here, we want a change there. We're given a democratic right in a very safe environment to go in and mark our X, and we only get 50 per cent of the people do that. I don't want to vote. There's nothing going to matter. It'll never matter if you don't go in and mark your X.

Your opinion really should matter. I know people might look at that as being – maybe it's the incorrect way of putting it, but how can you voice a matter if you're not going to engage in the process? That's how change happens. That's how the masses are spoken for, so the masses, if you get 80 per cent or 90 per cent, then they've elected a Liberal government, fine. Good on you, you got your wish and here you go and you carry on and hopefully everything works out and vice versa, but we're getting these low percentages and then you get this disenchantment of politicians are this and politicians that.

I was talking to a lawyer the other day and, in the conversation, I was talking about people's views of politicians. I said in the meantime, you're not far behind. It's terrible.

P. LANE: Imagine being both.

B. PETTEN: Imagine being both, yeah – and I'm not saying that. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands said that, but I have respect for my two colleagues opposite who are both, and they know that. We may argue, but I have respect. That wasn't my words. It was his words.

But I want to give credit where they come from. I never said that.

P. LANE: All in good fun.

B. PETTEN: All in good fun, but I can only imagine, we listen to it as being politicians, so what they listen to as having both, good point. I don't envy the second part of your job.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Don't forget the car sales part.

B. PETTEN: There's a car salesman one, too.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: We have a few of them here, too. I never got into that one. Some of them are good, I say.

My point of the matter, Speaker, as my time is starting to wind down, we go and we debate and we get out and as time goes on, sometimes I get frustrated. I know me and you probably discussed it ourselves behind the scenes. It's a struggle sometimes to do what's right. You're trying to keep ahead of things. And I say this again, everyone in here are trying to do what's right. We always lock horns. We always disagree. It looks like this bit of banter is always back and forth, but if you removed them layers of the banter, underneath that there are people who care. We just have different ways of getting there.

But if we stop caring about the people we represent and we stop caring about the province, we're in big trouble. But the bigger problem you have to face – and it happens with governments over time, too – is listening. Back in 2015, the former premier come in here and their slogan was, you can't lead if you don't listen. If you don't listen, you can't lead, or you can't lead if you don't listen, vice versa. Very true, no one questioned that logo; it was a good one. To lead, you have to listen. But I don't think that followed through.

As the year went on and 2016 and 2017 came and things started multiplying and I'll say this – and I'm saying this about the Liberal government that I'm referring to then – you could go back and talk about from 2011 to 2012 to 2013, when the PC government were there, there became inherent problems and we went through it and we experienced it. A lot of that, you

stopped listening. Bill 29 comes through; that was tone deaf. I mean, people can say what they want and friends in my own party might question what I'm saying but I'm trying to be as honest as I can. They were tone deaf, because I knew when I saw it up there that was not the way to go. But I was just someone that was kind of behind the scenes, whispering in people's ears, but I knew that was wrong. They forged ahead. We know the outcome among other outcomes; they stopped listening.

And I fast-forward then to the next administration that went on and that was a slogan, which meant a lot when you went through a crowd that wasn't doing none of that. And then it turned into, they stopped listening. And I think I happens in time – it becomes the norm in time, when you're there so long and you get there and you do stuff and you do it innocently. But the one thing we all – and I say all – need to realize is people are watching; people know.

And I revert to our newest Member, and I heard a couple of public comments he made since the election. He said: What he heard at the door – and this guy seems to be a really genuine, straight shooter. He said: People were frustrated because they felt that they weren't being listened to. Pretty powerful statement from a person that's – I don't know if I would have had that statement my first day when I got elected. I was, like, whatever, I heard everything at the doors. But that was the resonating thing that resonated with him. I've heard him say it repeatedly at different times.

Obviously, I heard – I went down and knocked on some doors down there. This man knocked doors 12 hours a day and heard that day in, day out. That is a lesson in that for a lot of people. Obviously, government listen to it loud and clear. We all should take from that. And better governance is never a bad thing and striving to be a better government is not a bad thing. But doing it for the right reasons is always the right thing. I say that with the utmost

respect and sincerity, because sometimes we lose sight of that. As time goes on and as you get longer in your tenure and we lose sight of that – even in Opposition, sometimes you can be guilty of that.

As I am down to my last minute, one thing I will say is my time as a Member representing my District of Conception Bay South has been an honour and a privilege, and I plan on continuing on even though a couple people chirp me. I plan on continuing on, but I am forever grateful that they gave me the opportunity because it was an opportunity that didn't come by chance. I worked like a dog to get it, because I tell everyone I lost my by-election by 60 votes and I won a general election in 2015, when the red wave was on – remember, it wasn't a grey wave, it was the red wave, and I won by 170.

In total, I ran two elections and the combined total margin of 110 votes. I never went in there by any means flying. There was no landslide. There was no headline of a landslide. The people were shocked there was no landslide, but I'll be forever grateful for the people of CBS for giving me the opportunity to stand in my place in this House and to talk about issues that are important to them and issues that are important to the people of the province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Premier, I think it's my first time to stand – Speaker. I am going to speak about our Premier; maybe that's why it was on my mind. This is my first time to stand since we've come back. It was good to get back into Labrador after the Finance Minister brought down the budget and I had an opportunity to be on the ground there for a couple of weeks.

It has been really challenging. We talk about the weather and climate change, and the Member just speaking talked about there's always another event to go to and sometimes you wonder about your energy levels and things like that. Well, I would say to the Member, who does have the luxury of commuting a few minutes each day to and from the seat of government, that if you represent Labrador, and I have other colleagues here in the House that represent Labrador, for me, my shortcut back to my riding is two hours on a plane and a 275-kilometre drive. I know that you have a lot of travel as well. Then, if I have an event farther north somewhere, like Cartwright, I have a 210-kilometre drive the next morning and then 210 back home and then on Sunday, I start the 275-kilometre drive back, and that's the shortcut.

This winter, due to weather and the really reduced flights out of Blanc-Sablon, I have been travelling quite extensively in and out of Goose Bay, which is a three-hour flight and then I drive 420 kilometres to the coast and then I do my district things. So you really do have to place a lot of value on the job that you do. It really is a tremendous privilege to serve.

I had no intention of standing here today, Speaker, but I have to respond to the Member and some comments that he spent considerable time – I was listening for some information about the budget. I didn't hear any of that. He spent considerable time talking intently about the politics of it all and how ashamed we are to be Liberals. I have to stand today. My whole life was not affiliated with any party. I was a very strong community advocate in my community, in my region, and then that grew to provincial boards and tables before I stepped out into public life.

We had a PC government that had been in power for 12 years at the time I was invited to run. I was heavily courted by the premier of the day for the PCs – heavily courted. I actually asked Dunderdale in Gander one

night: Why do you want me? She said: We want to leave the world a better place than we found it, our corner, and we think you're the person to help us do it. It sounded enticing, but at the end of the day, when I sized it all up, Speaker, in the district that I represent, we had a PC government in power for 12 years and we were in the wilderness.

I'll tell you now, I stand here today as an extremely proud Liberal, let the record show.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Because the progress that we have made in Labrador over the last decade is absolutely incredible. I would stand here day after day after day on petitions. I would come back on Monday and I would talk about the roads that I had driven over. As I was going through the door, my husband would say: When you're driving the vehicle stick to the high points. People here didn't understand that. We were driving on a gravel road. The House sat in the fall and in the spring and the road would get mucky and full of trenches and then it would freeze. I went through three vehicles in 11 years of my own expense. That's what it cost me to serve.

Little by little in July '22, myself and the now Minister of FFA, we stood on a piece of asphalt, we walked the last kilometre, I believe. It's not finished, we're still working on the road to the north, but border to border, 1,100 kilometres, a beautiful highway completed. Tourism is opening up like you would not believe. People are wanting to come and see what my grandfather often referred to as Canada's last frontier. Mining is just off the charts. This government is considering investing in mineral exploration in geoscience and Indigenous tourism.

But, Speaker, to listen to the Member opposite, to get up and talk about this mayor supported our candidate in the last

election in Conception Bay East - Bell Island and that mayor supported him and it was terrible. Have we come to a place, Speaker, where we are going to tell people who they can support? That is a democratic right that those of us in this House know people fought and died to give us that right. People size up who they feel will be the Member that will best represent them.

In the district that I represent, people have come out five times over 11 years to put their X on a ballot for me. I don't know anything more humbling than that. I really, really don't. You work very hard. I think there are a number of roles that an MHA plays. I think, first and foremost, it's our job to ensure that the people we represent have access to basic services.

Do we have the same level of services all around this province? We have challenges, Speaker, only 526,000 people and I represent a region where all of Labrador is only 6 per cent of the population and the land mass is the size of – you could take all of the Atlantic provinces and put them down into Labrador. We have challenges, but that's our job. But to sit here, today, and say we're really disappointed.

The other thing is, we don't get answers to questions when they ask them. My mind went back, I came in here pretty green. I didn't follow politics or anything like that when I came in in 2013. I'm going to share a little story. It might be embarrassing; that's okay.

My first day in the House I asked a question. When I went back the next morning and we met as a caucus, very naively, I said to our leader of the day: Can I ask the questions? The Member for Burgeo - La Poile will remember this because he was there. Can I ask the questions again today that I asked yesterday because I didn't get an answer? They thought it was quite funny. They said there is a reason it's called Question Period and it's not called answer period.

So all of these things we live through ourselves, Speaker. The Member opposite said he had a long list of the times that Muskrat Falls was raised. I lived through that. That was a very tumultuous time in Labrador. There are so many things that went wrong with that project: sold as a bill of goods for \$6.6 billion and it ballooned to more than double. But all that aside, it was such a difficult time for the people there who were not consulted; who were not given the right information. We were sitting there saying: Why did the PC government bypass the PUB when Nova Scotia, the UARB, had the luxury of looking to see what was best for them? People were so upset. Some of the people I represent, they went to jail for that. We watched them being pulled off in handcuffs. It was no joke.

Even today, Speaker, the Member for Torngat and myself in the south, our communities are on diesel generators. We fought so hard. At the time, we were told it's \$300 million to do a transmission down to the coast. It's not conceivable. The cost is so cost prohibitive. At the end of the day, \$300 million was a pretty small drop in the bucket.

I represent my hometown who have not had reliable power since our plant burned in October of '19. We're still working through. NL Hydro today wants to put in a regional plant for those six communities. That's not going over well with all of the communities because at a time when we're all talking about green, here we are still on diesel. There was a time when conversations, perhaps, could have been different.

So, yes, Speaker, we do continue to mention megaprojects that really went off track, that did not get out of the gate right; the homework was not done. That's why the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune often says we want to do due diligence and that is why we want to do due diligence, Speaker

I know that we are getting close to where it's lunchtime, but I just want to say that I could not sit here and say they're ashamed to be Liberal. The people that I represent, it's a different looking place than it was 10 or 11 years ago, I'll guarantee you that.

When I can go into my riding now, Speaker, and we have Welcoming Communities offices in the Labrador Straits recognizing that when a doctor comes in, what about their wife, what about their children, what do we have here for them. We have seniors' offices that are there providing support for seniors. All offices that this provincial government have invested money into, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: And we're going to continue on with the progress that we have, recognizing the tremendous potential that is in our beautiful, beautiful Big Land.

So I just want to say to the Member opposite, I was part – it is hard when you're out campaigning. That's not easy. In the dying days of the PC government, I participated in seven by-elections. I have the memories of out in the winter out in Windsor Lake with your jeans frozen to your knees and things like that.

But at the end of the day, Speaker, it is a tremendous privilege to serve. We have a bit of banter back and forth, but we're all here to represent the people and we have to respect – not stand in this House and say, I'm disappointed because this mayor supported that one or that mayor supported someone else. It is a democratic right, let them choose who they think can best serve their communities and who will leave their communities the best off at the end of the day.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now recess.

SPEAKER: This House do stand recessed until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin this afternoon, I'd be remiss if I didn't wish our Law Clerk a very happy birthday here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday, dear Gerrie,
Happy birthday to you.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Labrador West, Humber - Bay of Islands, Lake Melville, Mount Pearl - Southlands and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

In 1973, the government asked citizens of this province to adopt special projects to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Confederation with Canada. Martin, along with members of the Labrador Brotherhood, his wife and a few others, created the Labrador flag. The Labrador flag was introduced on March 31, 1974.

I'm proud to be standing here in the House of Assembly today celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Labrador flag. The flag is a perfect symbol of Labrador's heritage. Labradorians have shown their great affection for this work by flying Labrador flags across the region.

Thank you to Gateway Labrador and those who took part this past Friday, Labrador Flag Day, and they even came out on Easter Sunday to celebrate that day.

I ask hon. Members to join me, on Labrador Flag Day, in thanking Michael Martin for creating a statement of identity for all Labradorians for years to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Gord Hamlyn, a long-time volunteer in the City of Corner Brook, who passed away suddenly on January 14, at the age of 66, aboard his boat, *Dreams*, where he spent many hours and who was instrumental in establishing the Bay of Islands marina in Curling.

Remembered as a mentor and well respected, Gord was a firefighter with the city for 45 years and for 43 years he was an integral part of the Corner Brook firefighters annual Christmas toy drive.

In the first few years, he was one of many firefighters who volunteered, collected used toys and fixing any that needed repairs to make sure children in need had a good

Christmas. The toy drive was his passion, which he truly enjoyed and continued doing even after he retired.

Gord's dedication to helping others also extended to his church where he volunteered for many years helping out with the Westside Tabernacle's Christmas dinner and helping the less fortunate.

I ask all Members to join with me in extending condolences to his wife Leona; his sons Robert and Daniel and their spouses; his three grandchildren, Ben, Samantha, Sarah; and to many of his friends.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Speaker, Lake Melville continues to excel on the stages of accomplishment. Today, I congratulate one of our newest residents, Sakib Ibn Rashid Rhivu, known to us as Rhivu Rashid, on his recent performance at the Maritime Cubing Championships. A former record holder and National Champion of Bangladesh, he secured two bronze medals after a seven-year hiatus from elite competition.

The Rubik's Cube hit the international stage in 1980 becoming one of the most recognized icons of popular culture. In 1983, yours truly participated in a Maritime competition, although I was just happy to finish before everyone went home.

At his peak, Rhivu could solve a Rubik's Cube within seven seconds.

With 500 million cubes sold worldwide, many speedcubers continue to excel with records tracked by the World Cube Association.

CubeNation, a puzzle and speed cube shop for Bangladesh, describes Rhivu as: a true legend in the world of cubing. His unparalleled skills and dedication to the craft left an indelible mark on the cubing community. To us in Labrador, we know him as Rhivu our new host of CBC Radio's *Labrador Morning* who connects us all and who now has spawned a renewed interest in cubing throughout the Big Land.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the winners of this year's Mount Pearl-Paradise Chamber of Commerce Best in Business Awards.

This year's banquet was recently held at the Reid Community Centre in Mount Pearl and recognized businesses and business owners alike for their dedication and commitment to the community at large. This year's nominees and winners are corporate leaders in the community and are very deserving of this honour.

Congratulations to: Innovation Award winner Genoa Design; Entrepreneur of the Year, GOLFSHOTZ; New Business of the Year, Advantage RV Repair; Local Impact Award winners, the Mount Pearl Soccer Association and Ray's K&D Grocery; Customer Service Award recipient, Colemans; Employee of the Year winner, Olah Rabchevska of Coffee Matters; as well as Business Excellence Award winners, Up Sky Down Films for businesses with 15 or less employees, and Landwash Brewery, in the over 15 employees category.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating all of the nominees and winners of this year's Best in Business Awards, as well as the Mount Pearl-

Paradise Chamber of Commerce for hosting this wonderful event.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Speaker, Volunteers are the heart of our community. My District of Mount Pearl North is known for our volunteers and their service. It's volunteer week and a time to shine a light on the incredible work done by volunteers in our community.

Did you know that almost 50 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians volunteer in some capacity? Many community groups and organizations would not be possible without the help of many people who give so freely of their time and energy to serve others.

Just as our province benefits from services of volunteers, volunteers themselves also benefit. There are health and social benefits and that good feeling that comes from helping others. This week, take the time to say thank you to a volunteer in your community.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me today in thanking all the volunteers in our communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand today to highlight this year's Professional Municipal Administrators Annual Convention and Trade Show that took place from April 9 to 11 in the fine District of Gander.

As a government, we greatly value our long-standing and positive working relationship with Professional Municipal Administrators. I commend all municipal administrators throughout the province for their continued dedication to providing important services to residents. With a focus on strengthening communities, municipal administrators are critical to setting the standard for exemplary municipal leadership.

This year's event allowed for many municipal administrators to collaborate, network and enhance their skill sets. I would like to extend a hearty congratulations to those municipal administrators who received long-service awards spanning anywhere from 10 to 45 years.

It was also a time to reflect on colleagues lost this past year, including the Honourable Derrick Bragg, who was a former President of the Professional Municipal Administrators and a true community, municipal and provincial leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: During the convention, I had the opportunity to announce that, in collaboration with Professional Municipal Administrators, a new award will be established celebrating the distinguished career of the late Minister Bragg and presented annually to recipients at the convention. The award will acknowledge municipal administrators who demonstrate many of the same outstanding leadership skills shared by Minister Bragg. Stay tuned for details to come later on this year about the special award.

I would also like to thank Brian Hudson, outgoing President of the Professional Municipal Administrators, for his leadership

during his tenure, and I wish Connie Reid all the best in her new role as the first woman president of the association.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in recognizing Professional Municipal Administrators and its members on yet another successful convention and trade show.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement today.

Community co-operation is a pillar of what makes Newfoundland and Labrador stand out in Canada. Our communities have always distinguished themselves by pulling well over their weight when they have been asked for their help with their neighbours.

Without the dedicated professionalism of municipal administrators, we would face many more challenges in this province. The commitment of our municipal administrators to continuous professional development in order to better serve their communities is evidenced by the organization and participation in the Professional Municipal Administrators Annual Convention and Trade Show, which was held this year in my own beautiful District of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I would like to offer our condolences to those who knew Minister Bragg through his extensive involvement with municipal administration in this province.

I congratulate all those who have received long-service awards, and I thank them for their admirable commitment to the

continuing betterment of Newfoundland and Labrador's municipalities.

I thank Mr. Hudson and Ms. Reid for their valuable leadership within this important organization and I look forward to what the year ahead holds for the bright future of this province's municipalities.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

Administrators are institutional memories that keep towns moving. They know where to find things and they know how to solve problems in their communities. They shoulder the frustrations of their communities when it comes to lack of supports and the need for expanding supports and communities in the changing environment that is Newfoundland and Labrador.

If you believe in their value, then properly fund communities so that they can grow and expand and serve their residents to the best of their abilities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I am tremendously proud to tell my hon. colleagues about a special milestone that

took place on March 31 – the 50th anniversary of the Labrador flag.

The Labrador flag was conceived by a group of people and designed by Labrador's first native-born MHA, Mike Martin of Cartwright, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the province's union with Canada in 1974.

Sixty-four flags were hand-sewn by Mike and his wife Patricia – one each for the 59 towns and villages in Labrador, one each for the three Labrador Members of the House of Assembly and, of course, one each for Mike and his wife Patricia.

The colours represent Labrador's elements – white for the snow, blue for the waters and green for the lands. The branches represent the people of Labrador, including Inuit, Innu and non-Indigenous settler.

The flag is a rich tapestry of cultures, traditions and landscapes and reflects the uniqueness of Labrador and the resilience of its people.

Over the past five decades, the Labrador flag witnessed the triumphs and challenges faced by our communities. From Nain to L'Anse au Clair to Labrador West, the Labrador flag is an iconic symbol which aligns with our beautiful land and the strong, resourceful and warm-hearted people who are so proud to call this place home.

Planning is under way to celebrate this special anniversary. In recognition of this milestone, let us raise our spirits in celebration of the flag's values – solidarity, resilience and a deep-rooted love for our homeland.

May it continue to inspire generations to come and serve as a powerful reminder of the unbreakable bond that ties us together as Labradorians.

Happy 50th anniversary to our treasured and beloved Labrador flag! Here's to many

more years of pride and honour under its watchful gaze.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her message.

Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise in this House and speak about a place that is so near and dear to my heart. Labrador is a crucial portion of this union that we love to call Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Labrador flag is important, as it is a symbol that reminds us of the unique identity and needs of Labrador. In essence, an important step towards awareness.

The flag was introduced in celebration of 25 years of Confederation in Canada. Unfortunately, 75 years later, many of the same issues are still faced today. Fifty years of this reminder of Labrador, and the region is still gripped with unmet needs and systemic issues. Whether that be inadequate air access, unattainable or inadequate housing, access to health care, drug use and a whole lot of other issues.

Speaker, if planning is under way to celebrate the Labrador flag, I hope planning is also under way to get residents of Indigenous communities out of mouldy homes, as well as meaningful work to get the support facilities communities so desperately need.

As someone who grew up in Labrador, I have seen the challenges first-hand. I also see how they have become much worse. To work toward reconciliation in the Big Land needs action, not more words.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

As a proud Labradorian, it's important that we continue to celebrate the symbols that make us unique in this world. That's why I ask this government, given the 50th anniversary, I think it's finally time that the Labrador flag finally be officially recognized by this province as an official heritage symbol of Newfoundland and Labrador, as Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

At a time when our health care system is suffering from a significant shortage of health care professionals, I ask the Premier, why are you making cuts to nursing education?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to take the opportunity to share some information with my colleagues. I haven't got the question to stand and talk about the

great work that our LPN program in collaboration with the College of the North Atlantic has accomplished.

We had a pilot project that ran for the last two years, just to see what the uptake and interest may be in some of the more rural parts of the province, and we had a great uptake. We've got significant success in the applicants and the students who are enrolled in those programs. At the end of the pilot project, we determined that it was very appropriate and very timely, given the considerations around the nursing profession right now, to continue enrolment in those sites.

We've kept the enrolment numbers. We found additional funding to make sure that the resources are available in the classrooms in all areas of Newfoundland and Labrador so that everybody can go to school close to home.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, obviously, then there is a challenge because we've been told that the College of the North Atlantic has actually cut LPN seats and laying off 60 to 75 per cent of nursing instructors.

So, again, I ask: Why is this Liberal government cutting nursing positions?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't want to steal the Minister of Education's thunder on that one. Of course, we recognize from the college that there was the potential for cuts but, as the minister suggested, we found the money to make sure that those important seats are kept open.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: The Member opposite wants to talk about cuts. We know what he cuts. He cuts nurses, nursing positions from rural Newfoundland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the only nursing positions that were ever cut were under this Liberal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Those were the ones that made the decision.

I ask the Premier: Can you confirm that nursing students at Happy Valley-Goose Bay have to fly to St. John's to get the practical experience they need in a hospital environment on their own dime?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, just let me take an opportunity to address the preamble. The Member opposite was CEO of the health authority here in Newfoundland and Labrador, Labrador in particular, Mr. Speaker, an area that's starved for nurses. When faced with a decision that required leadership, the Member opposite decided to cut nurses. This government has not cut any nurses. We stand for nurses and we will continue to stand for nurses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Two hundred million dollars are cut out of health care in 2015-16 by the Liberal government.

Again, I ask the question to the Premier: How is it possible that nursing students are being asked to pay for their own way from

Labrador to come to St. John's to get the practical experience they need? Is this true?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: I am going to address the preamble once again. In 2015, true leadership as a CEO would have been to stand up and say how important nurses are to rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Instead, he took the easy road; that's the direction that this government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I heard the question. I'd like to hear the response. I understand everybody is passionate about it.

The hon. the Premier, you still have 30 seconds.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We know how the Member opposite treats nurses. We know how he is going to treat nurses if he ever has a leadership position again.

That's not going to happen on our side. True leadership would have been to make sure that the government understood –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – with respect to nursing students –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

When Members are ready, we will go back to Oral Questions.

The hon. the Premier, you have 15 more seconds.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the specific question, we do value nursing students. Sometimes they have to travel for different clinical experiences throughout our beautiful province. If there is an issue with travel subsidy, we will certainly take that back to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health to see how we can certainly help those, but there are bursaries available to them as well.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Premier's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, at a time when we can spend \$80 million on travel nurses, paying for air fryers and vacation trips and meals that were never paid out, we can't find money enough to cover the expenses of nursing students – our own nursing students – who want to come to work?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I ask the Premier: Have these nursing students been offered full-time jobs?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite knows all about operational issues. We know what his view of operational issues are. He's told us his view of operational issues, and what he put forward to this government to put in place, cuts, and we didn't put them in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: We all know what his view of operational issues are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I ask once again, have these nursing students, our own students here in Newfoundland and Labrador who are not asking to be paid \$300 an hour, they're asking for full-time jobs – have they been offered full-time jobs?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes, there are plenty of jobs for nurses in this province. If a nurse chooses to work in an area or wants to work in an area where there isn't a vacancy, obviously we cannot just create a job. But any nurse who wants a full-time, permanent job in this province, there is a full-time, permanent job available.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'll go back to the nursing students from Happy Valley-Goose Bay who, once again, are being asked to pay their own expenses to come here to do their training.

Will they be reimbursed for the cost of travelling to St. John's to do this training?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we will take that away, as I suggested, with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health to ensure that those nurses are well looked after. They are

important for the future and if there is any way that we can be helpful, we certainly will be, including the potential to reimburse their travel, Mr. Speaker.

As they know, we have incentives in place, including bursaries. The nursing contract is one of the best. It's an historic contract for the nurses of this province, all of which tries to incentivize full-time nurses, casual nurses to take full-time.

Nobody across Canada wants to use travel nurses, Mr. Speaker. I noticed yesterday one of the officials in New Brunswick is suggesting that this be a Canada-wide strategy. That's something that I would certainly support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday's federal budget was delivered, of course, and it's clear the Premier's letter-writing campaign did not work.

Once again, I ask the Premier: Do you believe the carbon tax should be axed?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, our letter-writing campaign did work. We wrote him yesterday and they actually decided to come up with a program to give back to small businesses with respect to the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: That was a collective letter. We delivered it yesterday. I'm glad they responded in the budget yesterday afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the carbon tax, I've been purely –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Premier, are you finished?

A. FUREY: With respect to the federal carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have been opposed to that. We want it stopped. It doesn't work. It doesn't work from a policy perspective. It doesn't work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That's enough arguing back and forth. I can't hear the responses. If it continues, Members are going to be named and lose speaking privileges.

Your time is expired, Premier.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it was the Liberal government opposite, as we know, that introduced carbon tax in Newfoundland and Labrador, actually voted to increase it and continued –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: – to support it as long as they were getting the money.

It was the Premier's friend who introduced carbon tax to the people of Canada, who said he wanted to modify behaviour. Well, our own Premier introduced his own tax called a sugar tax to modify behaviour.

The Premier has said that carbon tax is not the right tool. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are saying sugar tax is not the right tool.

Will the Premier axe the sugar tax?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take an opportunity again to address the question and the preamble, starting with the preamble, Mr. Speaker.

The carbon tax was introduced as a federal initiative, Mr. Speaker. It's a federal program. According to *Hansard*, the Member for CBS recognized multiple times that this is a federal program. We tried to fight it. They imposed the backstop. Prior to imposing the backstop, we actually lowered the gas tax in order to offset that impact on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We'll continue to fight with respect to the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, because it is not the right instrument for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Once again, I ask the Premier: Sugar tax is not the right tool either, will you axe the sugar tax?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, many, many, many organizations, the Cancer Society, the diabetes society, the dental association, world health association, all support the tax on sugar-sweetened

beverages, Speaker. What we've seen is people have a choice: They can consume it and pay a small tax or they can choose alternate beverages.

Speaker, it is very important that we continue to focus on improving the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We all know that we have the highest rate of diabetes; the highest rate of cancers; the highest rate of heart disease. I think, Speaker, the Member opposite should be supporting us in this endeavour to ensure the people of the province have better health outcomes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll remind the Premier that he could have stood with us three years ago and voted against it. I'm not against climate change; I believe in climate change, but I stand up for the people. It is not the biggest issue facing the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: They're worried about feeding their families, not climate change; that's the number one issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: That's what they're worried about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On March 5, the minister said: "We have asked the Comptroller General to review

what has happened to ensure that if there was anything untoward, that that is addressed and then referred to the Auditor General" That was March 5.

Will the minister table in this House the letter he received from the Comptroller General, along with the files that were passed over to the Auditor General – his words yesterday – relating to the scandalous private nursing scandal?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Office of the Comptroller General has passed full control of the review into travel nurses, agency nurses to the Auditor General. That was what the call was for and the Auditor General has stepped forward. We do not want to interfere with her work. We have full confidence in the Auditor General.

Allow me to say, for clarity and certainty, there is no summary, no analysis, no report from the Comptroller General's office – no summary, no analysis, no report. The Office of the Comptroller General was just starting the work when the Auditor General had decided to investigate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Great transparency, Speaker.

Minister, it has been almost three months since the scandalous contract was brought to light by the media and it is going to take the Auditor General 18 months – this is her words – to complete the review. Eighteen months is a long time.

So let me ask the minister: Have you directed NL Health Services to take

immediate action to recover the \$1.7 million that was inappropriately paid out for meals?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's an accusation that it was paid out inappropriately. We don't know yet, until the review is done, whether these payments were made appropriately by the health authority to the agency or not.

Whether the agency should have paid the nurses is another issue. If that is found, then other appropriate action will be taken, Mr. Speaker. But the review will tell us what has been appropriately expended by the health authority and what has not been appropriately expended by the health authority.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I ask the minister – I ask the Premier for that matter, government has the ability to ask the AG to prioritize something.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Why do we have to wait 18 months to get an answer on this scandalous contract that's upwards of \$100 million?

So he's telling us we have to wait for that. Eighteen months is too long, Speaker. Government has the ability to direct the AG to do it here and now, put everything else aside and do it.

Will you commit to doing that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I understand the AG is doing it here and now, but to do an appropriate evaluation, an audit to go in and look at the records, to look at the books, to look at expenditures, to ensure that a proper job is done, it does take time.

The Auditor General, I have great confidence in the Auditor General and I know that she has taken this on immediately. She will do the work that's required, but this work, I don't believe, can be rushed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

CBC unravelled a lot of things in two days. I'm sure the AG, it don't take her 18 months to do this work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Respectfully, I think you have the ability to make that happen faster, Minister.

Speaker, now that we've learned there's an additional \$40 million that was paid to private travel nurse agencies last fall, I ask the minister: How much of that \$40 million was paid out as meals?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that there's too much money being paid out to travel nursing agencies. Mr. Speaker, we've committed as a government to work towards recruitment and retention.

We have a deal with the RNU that addresses some of the retention issues. We had a nursing Think Tank working on some

of the retention issues. We continue to work with the Registered Nurses' Union on retention. We also work on recruitment.

The best way to reduce the expenditures on travel nursing is to recruit and retain the valuable nurses that we have in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

You can't ignore this. This is over \$100 million; you cannot ignore this and say we're going to wait 18 months to get answers. It's outrageous. That's what really irritates me. It's outrageous and they keep passing the buck.

They can make this happen today. You can write the AG today and say: Drop everything, I want this done now. They're not willing to do that.

Premier, will you commit to doing that? Will you commit to making the AG come in and do this report now?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: When you're ready.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I find the line of questioning from the Member almost appalling. The Auditor General is arm's length. She is independent. She has committed to taking this on immediately but to do a proper audit, a proper review of this, does take time.

The hon. Member, if he wishes to approach the Auditor General to find out why it takes so long, I welcome him to do that, Mr.

Speaker, but I understand, I know Members on this side understand and I know every accountant in this province would probably understand that this work takes time to do an audit and to do the type of work that is required.

She hasn't said she's going to start it in 18 months. She said she's going to start it now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I say to the minister, the minister should know. He ought to know where this money is spent. If not, we should put someone else that will know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Every department shouldn't have to have the AG to go in to tell us. We're asking a simple question: Where was the money spent? She's going to do an overall review. You can't tell us where this money was spent.

So, Speaker, can the minister provide a detailed breakdown, which he should be able to provide this, of the \$40 million, how it was spent including how much for coffee, Walmart furniture, taxis, vacations? This is a new \$40 million, Minister, you should know that – you should know that. Can you tell us?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to take the line of questioning seriously, but if the Auditor General needs 18 months to do this, and the Member figures I can put my hands on the ears of a rabbit and haul those answers out of a hat today, then the Member is living in Wonderland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association has spoken out about the increasing violence in the classroom and the failure of this government to address it.

Rather than dismiss their concerns, I ask the minister, when is she going to take action?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a great opportunity to talk about some of the work that's been ongoing in the Department of Education in collaboration with the NLTA. We've recently been able to form a Violence Prevention coalition, which included several departments across government. It was headed up by the NLTA. The Department of Education was a part of that coalition.

We recognize that the solutions to some of the issues in our classrooms can't be expected to come from those in the classrooms alone. We have to provide the supports. We have to look at the students as a whole, the system as a whole and consider that society itself shows up on the front doors of our classrooms.

So we have to address many of the major issues that exist in our communities, in our students before they show up at school to see how we can better address their needs in the classroom.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Our classrooms are seeing 29 violent incidents a day; that's a 40 per cent increase over last year. Almost 1,000 incidents were reported in just 38 teaching days. This requires action now. The NLTA is sending off alarm bells but this minister, is she listening or will we see actual action?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

We recognize that violence of any form in our schools is unacceptable. We want to continue to work with our partners to ensure that we have measures in place but the solution, as I said, is multi-faceted. We want to make sure that students who have complex needs receive appropriate supports and we also have to address that there are some unrelated instances of aggression in the classroom.

So one of the ways that was identified in the Teachers Think Tank, as a means to support the classrooms more, was to institute more student assistants, and we were able to do that immediately after our Think Tank conversation. Through this budget, we've allocated \$3 million to put an additional 104 student assistants in our classrooms, which was identified as one of the first upfront measures to work on while we continue our collaborative approach to a solution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

We have the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes, the Premier's Economic Recovery Team, the Health Accord NL Task Force, the Teacher Allocation Review Committee, the Teachers Think Tank, a report on absenteeism and

the NLTA prebudget submission and the list goes on and on and on – on and on and on.

So I ask the Member across the way: Why – is there anything in those reports that's worth actioning? Because right now we have not seen any action, true action, on this.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

The Member opposite references some very important pieces of work that have been done by some very educated and well-suited people to put that information forward to government. Because there is such a wide range of information available, a part of the Education Accord will be to take the recommendations, to look at all the information that has been presented over the years and to develop a plan moving forward – a 10-year plan that will outline how we prepare our students for a changing world, a changing economy, a changing space and it's something that we want to address upfront.

So it's an action-oriented plan. It won't simply be another rehashing of information that's available. There will be measurable outcomes that we want to see over specific intervals, ensuring that they are applied in our education system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Here we go. Such a serious issue and the can keeps getting kicked down the road.

In the media last month, the minister spoke that she was a little confused that these issues were brought to the forefront – the minister. She said she has been talking

about these issues in the department since she became the minister in June, almost a year ago. We look at this and the NLTA has said that the system needs an overhaul. Plans are never implemented; improvements are rolled back time over time and procedures are never adequately resourced.

Speaker, the minister has been given a failing grade. Again, when is the minister going to stop making excuses, creating reports and take action?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker, again, for the opportunity to respond.

If it was as simple as being able to shut down our education system and start from scratch, then it would be an easy solution. However, we have to ensure that services and resources are available on a day-to-day basis.

So as we continue to provide that in our classrooms, we have to take a look at the holistic approach and how we can support our students. As we look at the day-to-day operations, we want to make sure that the needs are met while we also look at the umbrella approach of all the resources that need to be plugged in, solutions that we can implement.

The ground around us has shifted in education so we have a new place to live and to operate. The pandemic has certainly changed how we do things in our classrooms, and we want to ensure that moving forward, we have adequate supports for the future, as we do day to day in operations.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Minister's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: They obviously got the shelf of inaction full of reports that have never been read.

Speaker, my office has been contacted by a number of seniors who are concerned about not being able to access driver's licence medicals because they have no family doctor. Seniors are being forced to use private nurse practitioners and pay a \$75 fee.

Why are Liberals penalizing seniors without a family doctor?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A benefit that was put forward in last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, we do require a physician to carry out these tests, but last year we did accept any invoices from individuals who paid through a nurse practitioner, and we provided a refund to those individuals.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, we see the Liberal government falling down on retaining health care workers in this province with the archaic JES system. On average, over 850 evaluations request approving every year. Equal work isn't equal pay right now.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will she commit to reviewing the JES system?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

The Job Evaluation System, which is common across industry and government, was first introduced in 2015. Of course, all unions were involved or most unions were involved in helping to develop that Job Evaluation System.

It has nine factors, Speaker, that are very, very important, of course, to job evaluation including: knowledge, interpersonal skills, responsibilities, for example, as well as concentration, complexity, those types of things are all very, very insured and monitored to make sure that they have the right analysis of the job description.

Of course, we also make sure that we have a program that if the person is not satisfied with the job evaluation, then they can have an appeal.

I would suggest to the Member opposite, if there is anyone who wishes to have an appeal, we'll certainly do that.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Workers in this province expect to be treated fairly.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will she commit to reviewing the public service and the new combined health authority to make sure that workers doing the same job class are getting the same pay and not being underpaid like we're seeing right now?

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

S. COADY: They should be. If there are cases where there are not, they certainly should speak to human resources at the Newfoundland and Labrador health system. That's the first line of communication. They can certainly have a review of their job evaluation and they can certainly then have an appeal.

So there is a process, not unlike other processes around the country in both business as well as government, so that we have, what I'm going to call, a very stable and equitable Job Evaluation System.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

People in my district are being refused access to a diagnosis of psychosis. They and their families are requesting diagnosis so that they can begin treatment and healing, but they are being released without any diagnosis, even if they have seriously harmed others. I've sent multiple examples of this happening to Labrador-Grenfell Health, the CEO of the provincial health authority and even most recently to the minister.

I ask the minister: Does it take someone actually dying before people in my district can access mental health care?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Whenever we hear of situations like this, it is obviously concerning, Mr. Speaker. I know that the *Towards Recovery* and the recommendations that were put forward there provided a solid foundation on which we continue to build on and continue to add mental health and addiction services. There is an all-party Committee put together now,

Mr. Speaker, to continue to build on the solid work of the all-party Committee, previously, and the *Towards Recovery* recommendations. I look forward to recommendations there.

If there are gaps, Mr. Speaker, that need to be filled, this government will fill those gaps and put the services in place that need to be there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, there are many major safety concerns on Route 450 and Route 440 in the Bay of Islands and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is well aware of them. Cars are being damaged and there is a potential for serious injuries. I know the department officials have made recommendations to have these serious areas repaired.

The ranking for repairs is now classified as Cabinet material and not available to the public. The Premier makes the final decision.

I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: When will you treat all districts the same concerning these major issues, which you are well aware of?

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

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

I heard the Member opposite yesterday in the budget debate. I said the only factual thing was when he actually stood up; after that, anything he said was not factual.

The reality is, in our department, and all Members know this, safety is the number one factor in determining how we allocate money to pave roads in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: I find it strange, Mr. Minister, when you met with the two mayors, you confirmed of the dangerous situations. So, please, don't insult those mayors.

Premier, you make the final decision in Cabinet in total secrecy. You say your government is open and transparent. There was almost \$30 million spent in your district last year with no authorization of the expenditure as a priority.

How can you justify having gabion baskets not replaced, with rocks regularly falling on the road and a tractor parked close by to remove the rocks on Route 450? An area of O'Connor Drive on Route 450 has ruts six inches deep in the pavement with hundreds of cars driving over it a day, more traffic in one day than areas in the Premier's district travels in a week.

SPEAKER: Get to your question, please.

E. JOYCE: Premier, will you ensure that the safety concerns expressed by many mayors —

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

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

I think it is fair to say, my predecessor as Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and as current minister, the decisions around the Roads Plan for any particular year are done and decided by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

We take all factors into consideration and many of the Members know that. I have talked to pretty well most of the Members here in this Chamber about how we allocate and deal with the issues in their jurisdictions, including the Member opposite.

What we have done and what we will continue to do is focus on safety and then allocate the roads money accordingly.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just a point of clarification in response to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition.

It's becoming a pattern, Mr. Speaker, that he's asking questions that are not factual or have no basis in fact.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

T. OSBORNE: I am providing an answer to the question that he asked earlier, Mr. Speaker.

We do understand that nursing students, registered nursing students, in Labrador are provided travel and put up in residence here at Memorial University with no cost to the student.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: Now, if the Member knows of somebody, Mr. Speaker, that that did not happen for, bring it to our attention and we'll make sure that it's fixed.

But we have to provide factual answers; we hope that the questions are factual as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, in response to the minister, I'm glad to hear that because my question at the beginning, before all the rhetoric, was simply asking: Can you confirm that this is true? Is this true? That's what I asked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

We'll move on.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

E. JOYCE: Point of order.

SPEAKER: Point of order.

E. JOYCE: I'll ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to table those recommendations in the House (inaudible).

SPEAKER: No point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

No point of order.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling three Orders-in-Council relating to funding precommitments for fiscal years '24-'25 to 2033-'34.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor (a) within an intimate relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard people present this petition on all sides of this House multiple times. Obviously, this petition is very near and dear to everyone in this House.

We've heard the minister stand up a couple of times and talk about it and say it's an issue before the courts. The reality of it is, I believe, that we have an ability to fix this now. This isn't about Mr. Jack Whalen. It is about Mr. Jack Whalen's courage and his ability to come here every day –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: – and sit and listen to this.

One of the Members mentioned yesterday that – and we've heard this when we've talked about all kinds of cases and certain things in this House – someone who has gone through any kind of an abuse reliving the situation. Well, this isn't about an individual reliving a situation. This man lives it every day and it should be rectified. We should be going out of our way to find a way to change the legislation, immediately. The Minister of Justice has the ability to do that. They ought to be looking at it, whether it's in front of the courts or not. Legislation can change in front of this House. It doesn't matter.

This is a simple thing right here. Sometimes in life, the hard choice and the right choice are the same choice. I understand the problem is that this is a hard choice for the minister to make, but the right choice is to put legislation in front of this House that amends the *Limitations Act* and gives, not only Mr. Whalen the justice he deserves, but all of the other victims in this province who have been abused at some point in their life and haven't had the ability to be heard in front of a court.

Justice delayed is justice denied and we have the ability to fix that; I urge this government to do that as fast as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove the limitations period for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor (a) within an intimate

relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim, i.e. the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred, that it was caused by or contributed to by an act or omission, or that omission that was of the defendant; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

I stand, again, Mr. Speaker, to present this on behalf of Jack Whalen and all the other young people who were physically abused. To be fair to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, this is not totally your decision. This is the decision of the government. This is the decision of the Premier.

So here we are saying to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety – and we know there are eight other provinces that have already gotten rid of the limitations, we know that. It's a government decision. So when this is not done, this is not the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, this is the government saying this, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So each Member should reflect for themselves. You should reflect; you should actually reflect. I know how Cabinet works. It's the Premier who makes the final stamp. So when we stand up with these petitions on this side of the House, I want all Members of government to reflect that you are part of the government.

I know the blame is coming on the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, but it's not. It should be every Member, to reflect on a person getting beaten on a regular basis, getting put into a four-by-four place for months at a time, physically abused. Then

we have a government here, all government Members who would stand up day after day after day – if there was any abuse – and I heard the Minister of Education today and I agree with her, any type of physical abuse in a school is wrong. How about Jack Whalen? How about Jack Whalen?

So this is where government has to stand up. This is where government has to take a stand. This is where we, the government, the two Opposition parties and two independents should stand up and say: We're doing this for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Let's do it together. Let's stand with the other eight provinces and let's bring justice to Jack Whalen and all the other ones that were abused (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state that there is no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Various forms of child abuse often co-occur and are highly interrelated. Treating child sexual abuse differently from non-sexual child abuse for limitation period purposes is inconsistent with the shift in society's awareness and understanding of the damaging effects of child maltreatment.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures those responsible for heinous acts can be held accountable, regardless of the time that has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice and ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland's approach to child abuse claims in line with human

rights standards and the revised statutes in most other provinces. I've said in the past, this applies to everybody.

Now, Speaker, I just want to draw everyone's attention, during the budget Estimates for Justice, I did ask if the department has done any preparatory work to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove the statute of limitations in cases of child physical abuse and I did receive a positive message in the answer for the Estimates.

It looks like the department and the minister are looking into that and there is prep work that's begun. I give full credit to the Minister of Justice for that. It seems that when the people speak, not only the MHAs, but the people of the province speak, the government has to listen.

It's very encouraging to see, in this case, that maybe the government is listening and trying to actually provide some solutions and basically get rid of this legislation that is actually creating a lot of problems; because, in actual fact, it is robbing our citizens of justice who, as children, were abused and tortured, and the name comes up, Jack Whalen. He's a strong advocate for this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: He is. What I find is you can talk about things, you know, as much as you want, but unless the people the of the province can relate to what we're saying, there is no reinforcement.

So, in actual fact, at the tender age of 13, Mr. Whalen went into custody and the treatment –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Point of order.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure stated, when he stood up in a question, that the only thing I did yesterday right was stand up. Anything I said after that was false.

I want to table a document which the Member for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's stated, when I asked the MHA, will you be able to pick up the phone and call the Transportation Minister and say that these roads need to be done in this year's budget, they will be done.

That's one statement I made. The second thing is when I stated the Premier got almost \$30 million, I want to table the document which shows from Transportation and Infrastructure where it was actually \$30 million spent in the Premier's district if I get leave to table the documents.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Does the Member have leave to table the document?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

I will take the point of order under advisement.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, and then I would like the minister to apologize.

SPEAKER: Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. LANE: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: Amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

I'll table this one again today, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see today that we have a number of our colleagues from both parties as well as us, as independents. I think it is fair to say we're all united in this.

I do believe and I was encouraged to hear the Member from Torngat and what she said about the answer to her question to the Minister of Justice. I really believe there is nobody in this House of Assembly – I don't think anyone in general, really, is going to argue with the fact that what is being said here is absolutely right, and that the abuse that Mr. Whalen, and perhaps others like him, endured was right.

It definitely wasn't right. It happened under the watch of the government. Again, this is not some abuse that happened in some private home. This was while in secure custody. There are many questions about the fact whether the man should have been in secure custody to begin with and how long he was in secure custody. I don't know if Members over there, or other Members, have had a chance to sit down with Mr. Whalen.

I sat down with him and his daughter, I believe, for about an hour or it could have been longer than that, and listened to his story about the fact that you end up in secure custody for a very minor thing and what under today's standards, you might be in there for a week or so that you're gone, to

end up being in there for a couple of years or whatever the case might be because there was no sentence, per se. They just basically send you there and leave you there, basically forever – indefinitely. Then to be put in, basically a four-by-four cage and left there for hours and hours on end, I mean that is torture.

It's totally unacceptable, and we cannot, as a society, stand for it. I know we don't stand for it as a society. I really believe that no Member in this House on either side would ever condone this or say that what happened is right, because it's absolutely wrong.

There are many times we stand here and we talk about what we could do and what we should do; we have an opportunity to actually do something. We can all agree and actually do something and remove this *Limitations Act*, not just for Mr. Whalen, but for anybody else who has endured this kind of abuse.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: We're debating the amendment to Motion 1.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a pleasure, always, to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Topsail - Paradise, and residents as a

whole throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a job that I take very seriously, and I continue to try my best to be the spokesperson or to bring their issues to the forefront and find solutions.

I do want to take a moment where this is Volunteer Week, and applaud and recognize the many, many volunteers throughout my district and all districts throughout the province who do so much – so much – on all kinds of levels for the people in their communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: It doesn't matter which government is in; it's something that you cannot put a price on, what they do.

The motto or the slogan for this year's Volunteer Week is: Every Moment Matters. Of course, that goes for life in general, "every moment matters," and you take every moment and you value every moment and you do what you can within that moment, if not for yourself, but for others.

A little quote that I've always had in the back of my head – as many in this House, I've been an active volunteer. I was many times and I continue to be, and there are so many other volunteers around, and I always say the smallest action is greater than the grandest intention, and that means a lot.

People can go out there and say yes, I'm going to help you there, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, and do nothing. But every little act that people actually do, compiled together, is a big help to the communities around us.

So, again, I applaud our volunteers in every corner and every cove of this great province and what they do to keep our communities thriving. Thank you so much for that.

I guess when we're up here talking about the budget, I have to talk about issues that are of importance to my district, and it has

been mentioned already. One of those that was top of the list for 10 years has been the high school in Paradise.

When I was elected to municipal council back in 2013, it was an issue that I heard at many of the doors, and it was an issue that I started pushing at that point in time. To the point where we did get it in the budget. It was in the budget in 2015 and there was a consultant hired and we were going to have work start on that high school.

However, with a change in government, that high school was deferred indefinitely. We didn't give up. I kept bringing petitions to the House. We kept asking questions on it, media releases – again, after hearing other announcement, and this is not pitting community against community, but when you're at the top of the English school district list for capital works projects for eight, nine years and longer, you expect to see that school built; not to see other schools come out of the woodwork and be approved. Again, not faulting them for getting the announcement on the school.

In October this past year, on social media, there was a young mother who started a Facebook group. I reached out immediately, because that was the spark you need and you need to get community involvement, and I said: Let's bring together a committee. And we did.

That committee has been quite successful and are boisterous and motivated in getting this done. You know, we had a great meeting with the minister and given all assurances: Yes, you're going to get your high school. Stay tuned, it will come out in the budget, and everyone was thrilled. I know there was an announcement made, a great photo op up in Paradise, talking about the school announcement.

Now, I wasn't invited in the photo, but that's neither here nor there. I went and was talking to the media at the time, and I was asked a couple of questions. One was:

What do you think about the announcement? I said: Well, it's a good thing, but it's still just an announcement. We're not seeing a shovel in the ground yet. The next question the media asked me was: What assurances do you have from government that this is going to be built? I said: Other than some meetings, really no assurances.

So we waited, and the budget day came. I will say, the parents and constituents in my district were really anxious, in a good way, waiting to hear their school announced and waiting to hear the plan for the school going forward. I know a lot of them were texting me saying: Was it done? Was it said? Where is it? And unfortunately, there was a lot of disappointment because I think – well, it's not that I think; I have been told that a lot of them are disappointed that there wasn't more in the budget on school.

It was, in fact, one line. That one line was – and I stand to be corrected on the quote – \$50,000 allocated for the preliminary planning for the school or something to that effect. Then all the questions start coming forward. What does that do for our school? That's 12 months. That's the next budget allocation for 12 months, \$50,000. What's going to be done?

The media called me the next day to ask about it, and I said: Look, we did not expect shovels in the ground this year, but we certainly expected more to be done in the way of planning and preparation. The year previous, the renovations and extensions to Pilley's Island, there was almost \$1 million allocated to begin engineering and architectural work. I think even if that was somehow there, it may have been more palatable to swallow, and that wasn't there.

So when I talk about the budget and the people will say oh, you're going to vote for the budget because the school is there. The school is not there. It's still just an announcement, with a small price tag attached to it. When it comes to talking

about this budget, I have to say what the people in my district are telling me, and they are disappointed. They are severely disappointed over this. We will continue to lobby and advocate with the individuals involved and with the minister.

I do applaud – the minister had took us in and we had a good meeting with her, there's no doubt about it. I understand some of these decisions go across multiple portfolios. Infrastructure being one, whom I've also met with that minister on the school.

That's one issue that was a disappointment when it comes to the budget, and I mention that upfront because that is a prime issue for residents of Topsail - Paradise. There are other issues in there that we talk about. I hear government talking about, supporting and justifying the sugar tax – a tax that initially, I think, projected \$9 million and \$12 million. Then, I think they collected, to date, something like \$17 million.

When that was first put out there, there was talk about it going towards new programming and the like. The data, when you talk about diabetes, it's correct. What happens with diabetes, it's correct. We have one of the highest rates of obesity in the country.

There's something I've been banging a drum on here since I've been here and that's been on continuous glucose monitoring devices. I've done the research. Again, as the government quotes, I can quote Diabetes Canada on this as well: 30 per cent of strokes are the result of poor management diabetes, 40 per cent of heart attacks, 50 per cent of kidney failure requiring dialysis, 70 per cent of non-traumatic amputations. It's the leading cause of blindness – this is Diabetes Canada – because of poor management of diabetes.

These monitoring devices will pay in spades back in terms of how they help our society. I

talked to the paramedics; thousands of calls are made each year for individuals who are suffering from diabetic emergencies. These people are also showing up at our emergency centres. Diabetes Canada will tell you that between \$70 million and \$80 million can be saved per year in this province by coming up with a continuous glucose monitoring plan subsidy.

It's beyond me, when we go through and we do this Health Accord and we talk about the social determinants of health, we talk about healthy eating and we have this staring us right in the face, an investment in this would pay off in spades to everyone, keeping people healthier, keeping people working longer, keeping people active longer; taking the workload off our paramedics and our health care workers in the emergency rooms.

Yet, government chooses to come in with a sugar tax, behaviour modification tax, that's what is said. Behaviour modification takes in both negative and positive reinforcement when you're trying to modify behaviour. To me, this is negative enforcement, what this is doing. Because right now that sugar tax is not affecting anyone. We see it. We see it in the dollar figures, keep going up. People are still buying the sugary drinks.

But if you look at the information from Diabetes Canada, sugar tax does fall on that list. But what's one of the prime ones? Making healthy choices available and affordable. What are we doing? We can come in with a device and a subsidy that will cost us far less than the return and that return or portion of it can be put towards better choices. Yet, we choose to come in with – last year, I think it was \$800,000 for a program for, I think it was, people in the pediatric diabetes program. This year's budget, I think it was expanded, another \$1.8 million for those under 25 who are participating in the insulin program and have Type 1 diabetes.

With all the information out there, with all the support out there, why do we not have a full-fledged program or subsidy program for these devices that help people so much? Think about a child that has Type 1 diabetes.

Now I'm on one of the school councils up in Paradise. I was in there for an event, Teacher Appreciation Week, actually, I was there. I actually had to dress up as the school's mascot. I was the school's mascot, so I was Sarge, the big, black Newfoundland dog.

AN HON. MEMBER: There's a healthy choice.

P. DINN: Yeah.

I'm in that costume and, of course, in between welcoming different kids into the school, there was a little back room where I would sit down, haul that head of the dog off so I could sit back and cool down. In the next room, I counted at least – at least – six parents coming in, having their child paged to come down and get their insulin. At least six that day I was there coming down to – now, if you have these devices – and I'm by no means the expert on it, other than the research I've done – a parent can monitor that child from work. That parent can look and see if little Susie's up or down. I still don't understand why we cannot look at a better program here.

We talked about the colour of the books in grey and red and blue. I really don't care what the colour it is or who takes credit for it or whatever, but the information out there supports this and I think we really need to do more on that front.

There are so many things I could talk about. Let me just jump ahead. Let me look at this one now, IVF, in vitro fertilization programs here in the province. In the last couple of weeks, we've seen story after story after story in the media talking about this; talking about the costs to young mothers and

young couples who want to start a family and how they cannot get those services here in the province.

Now, the Premier, when he was first running, he promised this. He promised IVF services to be available in this province. What's that, four years ago now? Four years ago – nothing. In October, I think they announced an RFP to look at IVF services. We could have been a leader in Atlantic Canada. It was only two years ago, I think, PEI introduced a program.

Now, they only have to drive over the Confederation Bridge to get to service, but every other province, outside of PEI, actually has services right in their province. We have mothers who fly to either Ottawa, Halifax or Calgary, I think, are the main ones. The costs associated with that is huge, not to say anything about the stress.

The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality, as well as the Minister of Health, it's in their mandate letters. It's in their mandate letters: increase access to fertility treatments in the province. It's in their mandate letters. And here we are, four years later – in fact, in 2016, at a Liberal AGM, they tabled a resolution to make it available in this province.

It's really amazing. We talk about it, trying to be proactive or just action, period. Words all sound great: we're going to do this; we're going to do this; we're going to do this. But you really deserve action.

We talk about the population crunch we deal with here in this province. That's something that everyone should be entitled to, the opportunity to have and start a family. That should be one of the prime things that we should be pushing for here.

There are doctors in this province who have proposed, a number of times, to set up a clinic in this province. They tell me for IUI there is a one- to two-year wait-list; not all medications are covered; fertility drugs

could cost between \$2,000 and \$10,000. You have travel and accommodations and anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for the procedure. You have to go on a moment's notice. This is not something you book – next week, let's do this. No, you go on a moment's notice. You drop everything and you go.

I learn more as I go along. I've been lucky. My wife and I have been lucky. We planned three kids. We had three kids. We wanted them about two years apart. Wonderful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: All wonderful, but not everyone is so lucky. You actually pay for your embryos to be frozen and stored – up to \$500 a year – either in Calgary or Toronto, Ottawa or Halifax. I mean, really, we cannot after so long, after this promise being made, and we're still looking at ways to do it. Well, reach out to all the other provinces who are doing it. Reach out to them. Okay, how are you doing this?

But these are things – and there are many others I can go on about and I'm sure I'll have another opportunity to do so. There are seniors. There's mental health. There's education. There are the roads. There is all that. There are so many issues that I can go on and talk about, but those are three main ones.

Social determinants of health – education is one of them. Being able to afford proper food is one of them and, of course, being able to have and raise a family in your province is certainly one of them.

These are all things that, I would say, a lot of us don't even think about. We take for granted. But there are so many out there who are struggling to pay the bills, struggling at our overcrowded schools, not getting the education that we need and, certainly, those who wish to have a family and are met with roadblocks. I'll say more as we proceed along.

Thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Trimper): I thank the Member.

I next recognize the hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Of course, it's always an honour to rise in this hon. House and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue. It's always nice, each time I get up, I want to acknowledge the volunteers in my district, being Volunteer Week. Like I said before and I'll say it again, our province is run by volunteers, to be quite honest.

If it wasn't for the volunteers, we'd be in pretty rough shape because they are our firefighters, they are our councils and they are our service organizations. They do some after-school programming and stuff like that. I just want to give a shout-out to all the volunteers in our district because it's also National Tourism Week, which ties into Volunteer Week. A lot of the people who run our tourism operations and operations that we can afford some money to, a lot of times it's our volunteers and volunteer organizations like recreation committees that are administering these programs, whether it be Active NL money or Community Enhancement Employment Program, which the District of Placentia West - Bellevue have been beneficiaries of.

Like I said, being a shadow Cabinet minister for Tourism, I see some real positives. If you look back even just go back 20 years ago, we weren't even on the stage that we're on today. We are bar none, world class already and that's only improving and we will always be world class, I think, from here on in because of the steps that we've made in those last 20 years to really come on board and be a tourism entity that is renowned now around the world, not just trying to

market to the rest of Canada and stuff like that.

While we want our fellow Canadians to come here and see our beautiful province, we certainly want the world to come see it. With that, there are some drawbacks, but there are some positives as well. If you're going to talk about the negatives, I'm always a believer that you should talk about the positives in some light, just so that people know that we are headed in the right direction.

This year, through tourism, we are the department that are going to be looking into the 75th anniversary of us joining Confederation. While that has pros and cons to it as well, I think, for the most part, we are a proud province of the country of Canada. We do our part to help the economy of Canada. So, like I said, when we look to Ottawa for a partnership, I don't think we need to go there anymore cap in hand – and that's not to say that we're entitled, but the thing is that we've more than paid our share per capita to this country to make sure that we deserve our rightful place in Confederation and the Dominion of Canada.

With that being said, the Tourism Department adds \$1 billion of value to our economy. I think it's going to be doubled even within the next five years because we are moving in the right direction, but we need to make these strategic investments. We have to make sure that the money being spent is like the old saying goes, and I say it all the time, I'd like to see people get three nickels out of a dime.

If we're being very frugal on our money, I think it gives us a great opportunity to make sure that we're putting our best foot forward and that means having the checks and balances in place so that money doesn't go missing or we got to go looking for it or we need a paper trail to find it or anything like that. I think that having some of the organizations that are administering the

different programs and different funding have been beneficial to date, there's no doubt about that.

The things that we are looking at, not only is it the 75th anniversary of Confederation, but we're going to celebrate this year also the Year of the Arts, which is from our artisans to our musicians to painters, everybody that contributes to our tourism footprint so that we have an offering to the people that we're trying to attract to our shores.

We've always been known quite well for our music. Our music culturally defines us in the country of Canada, but not only that, throughout North America because people now understand what we're all about. Just last summer, I was fortunate enough to go to Gander and take in our Come From Away performance which, again, I keep using the word "world class" when it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador because that's what it was. It was unbelievable. A couple of times I even had a little bit of lump in my throat.

Like I said, if you're engaged in the process and followed it entirely from start to finish, you understood the whole story and you understood what happened during 911 when Gander was the security partner, I guess we could say, for the United States in everything that was going on, on September 11, 2001.

At the time, it was a little bit bewildering, but that's what Newfoundlanders do, they step up in a time of need. We do our Canada Day, but to us it's a kind of a memorial as well of when we fought side by side with Canada and we were our own country.

Like I said, now that we're into the 75th anniversary of joining Canada, then we walked side by side with each and every Canadian and couldn't be prouder to do so. On the world stage, from astronauts to hockey players, we are the best of the best and a lot of those actually come from Newfoundland and being such a small

population, I'm very proud to say I'm a Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: With the Year of the Arts, as well, like I said, we're world class when it comes to our music and we see that our music is going all throughout, not only North America, but the world and very renowned. We have our own artists that are receiving many awards on an annual basis, based on their creativity and how they do things.

What I want to say is that, as society, we support that industry, that music industry. There's never going to be enough support because, obviously, you want as much support as you can get. With that being said, I think that we're on the right path when it comes to music. Therefore, I would like to say that we're on the right path as well with film because right now with the impetus of people wanting to come here to film movies and TV shows and the like, the end product is spectacular because Newfoundland is the backdrop of these productions.

I was fortunate enough to be part of a few production, I got to witness, last year, the premiere of *Peter Pan* that was mostly shot out in the Bonavista area. I was totally amazed with how the landscape and the coastline and everything about it was such a big addition to the film and the impetus of what the story was itself, so for that I was happy to do that. Like I said, if we're at \$1 billion, then I think that our strive should be \$2 billion and then go to \$4 billion and keep going because the sky's the limit when it comes to artists in our province. That's who I want to give the credit to, it's our artists.

While we can be here and pass legislation for funding and stuff like that, it's our artists that are understanding because every artist struggles to start, but once they get established, everybody thinks they're an overnight success, but it took them that long

to establish their "overnight success" – I'll use air quotes on that.

Not too many people are an overnight success. They start off tapping around with an instrument or a paint brush or a hammer in their shed or their basement or the back of their house, but, at the end of the day, they hone their craft because it interests them. That's the thing that I heard all my life was that if you enjoy what you do, you'll never work another day in your life. Fortunately, I was able to finally live my own dream of being a politician and representing other people. It really enthralls me to represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue because I've gone all throughout this world and my heart has always stayed in Placentia West - Bellevue. It's hard to leave your heart at the moose in Goobies but it's pretty easy to pick it back up when you get there.

With that being said, one of the biggest things that we have here, that is working for us as well, is our world-class facilities. There are a number of those throughout Placentia West - Bellevue, which was evident during COVID, as well. I'll take the Chance Cove trail, for instance. It was world class. It was probably the most visited location throughout the province throughout COVID. Albeit, it's closer to this end of the Avalon Peninsula, but they were very responsible in how they did things about masking and social distancing and this kind of thing. It was such a big uprise for the community in what their abilities were. They were able to capture a healthy economy because of that.

Unfortunately, the biggest complaint that we got the whole time was about the roads in Chance Cove and the access road, which is a bypass road if something happens out on the highway from Route 1, which is Trans-Canada Highway, into the branch that if you go right, you end up in Bellevue Beach, but if you go left, you're going to Chance Cove. All that road and both sides of that branch really needs refurbishment because if we're

going to have a world-class facility, we have to give them roads that are world class to travel on.

I spoke recently with the minister about this and we're on the same page with that. He sees it as a priority as well, that we really need to make sure that we're making it easier for people to get to these world-class destinations.

Like I said, the road in Chance Cove, well it's kind of double fold there because it is a bypass road and I think if everybody understands, you all come through my district to get here to the House of Assembly, if you're driving. We all are familiar with the Doe Hills. There's no cell coverage there and there's always adverse weather because Trinity Bay is meeting Placentia Bay and whether it's snow or fog or rain or whatever. I'm a little bit nervous for the rest of the province, to be quite honest, when I drive through there and there's no fog because then I know it's probably pretty bad somewhere else in the province.

Like I said, I would like to echo to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure that it is places like Chance Cove that have something to offer that we need to work in concert with the Department of Tourism to make sure that that offering is full and complete and you're able to get there without any impediments. That's a real big deal, because what we're doing now throughout my district – and my district goes seven kilometres outside of Whitbourne right to Marystown. My colleague on the other side from Placentia - St. Mary's can echo this because we've had to work on getting the trail from, basically, Clarenville to Argentia for ecotourism to be completed so that it's a continuous trail. So somebody comes from North Sydney, they can – we have to work with Marine Atlantic on this, obviously – come basically from North Sydney on their quad or their Side by Side or anything like that and end up taking the

ferry back in Argentia, if they go right across the province.

We encourage that and we want that. We want to make sure that we're aware that sometimes there are washouts on the trail and stuff like that. It's been good to stay continuous and I think that it's something that we can build on because once we get it to Argentia, if we want to make that ecotourist traveller stay a little longer, we can link it in then to the East Coast Trail so that they can go a little bit further to their destination and still come back to Argentia to get the boat, or turn around and go all the way back to Port aux Basques. It's up to them what kind of excursion they were looking for.

We are also looking to improve ecotourism on the Burin Peninsula, because I've been working with a lot of trail committees on the Burin Peninsula to get a lot of trails that we kind of have to do the individual trails throughout communities first. Then we're going to try and link them all up, which we've linked a few already.

Like I said, I appreciate the fact that these trail committees are working with me so that we can get the right applications in and we can make sure that we're putting the applications in in a timely manner so that we can secure the funding to continue doing the good work that our volunteers and our workers do that get hired to do these contracts.

There are just a couple to work on: the Parker's Cove got Crown Au Buck right now. I would ask anybody, if you want a good trail to give a try, go down and see the Crown Au Buck in Parker's Cove. They just started this. I would say we're about the third season in, but it's been done by the hard work of volunteers. I was able to secure them some money with different programming through Active NL and CEEP. I'll tell you right now, the group there, and I'll give a shout-out to them: Colin, Francis and

Christina. I don't want to forget anybody, so I'll stop there.

In the meantime, we helped create their trail committee and then, consequently, we went from there where they've been securing funds, and now we have a world-class facility there as well.

Red Harbour Trail, we helped them get back in alignment with the province because the old trail committee, I guess it kind of just went by the wayside and it wasn't really continued on. We got it all straightened up and back now. Like I said, they've put in bridges and everything to link up the old road from Red Harbour to Rushoon, which is unbelievable, and I've travelled it.

I've travelled all these trails, to be honest, but the thing is when you look at it as the MHA, you're not necessarily going by looking at it for ecotourism; you're looking at what we could do to improve it or how we can make it better for everybody that's showing up.

The Northwest Trail down in the Marystown area, they just got another pot of money to finish their trail to meet up the Garnish Pond trail with the Point Rosie trail. So, like I said, we're continuously working on it, and I'll work the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development and the Member for Burin - Grand Bank so that we can continue on with the good work that's being done as we link up the two districts to get ecotourism.

Again, same as the Argentia to Port aux Basques or the Port aux Basques to Argentia thing. If they drop in early, probably like the Swift Current area, they can have a night at a beautiful resort there at the Kilmory Resort. Then they can take their quads and bikes and Ski-Doos or whatever and go right around the Burin Peninsula and end up back at another world-class facility and a beautiful town that's really a diamond in the rough when it comes to the Burin Peninsula.

Like I said, a lot of things that we're doing is that almost every community is creating a trail. English Harbour East is doing it because they saw a need for their seniors to have somewhere to go and have a nice secure trail to walk around, so we've done like a boardwalk and stuff like that.

I'm working with people, and like I said, all it takes is for a town to have a recreation committee and we can move forward together in securing some new funding for refurbishment of trails because from walking, riding, hiking, cross-country skiing, skidooring and the list goes on and on, there is so much to do in my district. Although my district is very industrial, I will guarantee you, there's a lot to do when it comes to tourism in my district.

I will say that the artisans, the musicians, the people who are in film, the actors – we have a world-class theatre down there in the Grand Bank Regional Theatre, which is unbelievable. The players who act down there and put off shows are world class. I love getting an invitation every year for usually the premiere and the closing and, if I'm available, it's certainly a priority of mine.

Like I said, there are a few things that I'll touch on at another time, but one of the things that we need to straighten out – and I will start probably here and the next time – is to get a better understanding from the federal government as to what Marine Atlantic is classified for. Because that's supposed to be our Trans-Canada Highway and the last time I checked, it didn't cost anything to go from Ontario to Manitoba. That needs to be fixed and it needs to be fixed soon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I thank the Member.

I now call on the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This is my first chance to speak on the budget for 2024. I spoke on the budgets now several years since I got elected in 2019. When I got elected in 2019, most of my colleagues know that my main motivation for running and challenging to be the MHA for Torngat Mountains is I wanted to draw some attention and try and actually restore the freight boat, ferry, that used to bring groceries, building materials, household goods from the Island directly into my communities.

We all feared what would happen once that freight boat was taken off in 2019 by this Liberal government. But, Speaker, settling into the role of MHA and being the MHA now for over four years, I realize there's a lot more to it than just certain things. That being said, the biggest priority in my district is about people being able to access food. Now, this is a budget. What's the budget doing to help people in my district access food? Very little unfortunately – very little.

In addition to accessing food, I speak a lot in this House in Question Period and Petitions about access to housing. I look at what's this budget doing to help with housing. Not only for my district in Northern Labrador, where we have a lot of overcrowding. We have a lot of issues with housing. Somewhere here is the Federal Housing Advocate's report on housing of our trip when she went into Northern Labrador.

One of the things that she talked about was access to adequate housing being a human right. When I heard that, it reminded me of letters that were written to the minister of CSSD who was responsible for housing back in 2020 and 2021. In one of the letters I'll quote here – according to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, adequate housing is inherent to the human rights and safety of all individuals.

The letter goes on to talk about Indigenous communities across Northern Canada, including Nunatsiavut. So why do we tolerate human rights violations by allowing these housing conditions to exist?

In actual fact, I was in a little bit of a dilemma last fall after the Federal Housing Advocate released the report. There was some media, but we weren't really getting much traction on actually having some success to have action or even planned action to address our housing crisis. So, for me, one of the things that I did is I went up to the communities that the Federal Housing Advocate visited and I went in with a reporter from CBC. I went in with a reporter.

Now, I didn't want to do that. Not that I didn't want to. It was a reporter that I highly respected and probably the only one that I would have went around with. My dilemma was I was really worried that people in the communities would agree to be interviewed on TV and have, I guess, their lives exposed to the province. Not because they wanted to, but because they felt an obligation to help me, the MHA for Torngat Mountains, who was fighting so hard to draw attention so we could get solutions, so we could get our housing issues addressed. I would say to them, before they agreed, don't do this for me. If you're doing it, it has to be because it's something that you want to do, that you think would actually make a positive impact. Because reading stuff about our housing conditions and hearing about it is different than seeing it.

I have to say, one of the things I did after we were done is I talked about the courage, the courage of people to expose themselves to the world, practically, and bring them into their homes and show them their housing problems.

After that, I'm still dealing with seniors who have no running water; not that they don't have hot water, some people lose their hot water tanks in Northern Labrador. But we have seniors now living with no running

water. To me, that's very discouraging, so housing.

Also, transportation: Transportation is a big thing. Transportation is not only about the ability to travel when you need to travel for your professional life, for your job or travelling with your family or about just being able to visit people or go on vacation. Transportation is about mental health, the impacts when you can't travel because it's too costly, you can't afford to travel.

I remember when I was in the House of Assembly, I was fairly new, I had a petition about trying to get a subsidy for our airline travel. I went in on my phone and I booked a flight, a round trip from Goose Bay to Nain and I told everyone how much it was. It was probably about \$1,000. At that time, people were shocked; shocked at how much we were paying, just within our region; not travelling across the province or to somewhere in the States or across Canada, within our region.

For us, transportation is a huge issue. What's this budget doing to address transportation issues? It's not doing anything.

In addition to that, all my issues I talk about in Question Period and bringing petitions forward, when I use my time after reading the petition, what I try to do is I try to talk about the petition so that people will understand what residents in Northern Labrador, in my district, go through.

One of the petitions I presented a lot in the past has been – I'll take one, there's a petition there where the Town of Postville is asking for a second nurse for the community of Postville. The first thing I talk about in that petition is, it's not about having a second nurse on call, so if a nurse gets called out at night, she's up all night with a sick patient or somebody was injured or it might be working a medevac and the next morning, that nurse is tired, it's not about

asking for a second nurse that they could be relieved, it's more than that.

One of the greatest barriers that face that one nurse, that single nurse in the entire community of Postville is there's no backup, also the lack of policing. There's no RCMP in Postville. I asked the question about restoring some RCMP policing presence in the Town of Postville yesterday when we were doing budget Estimates. I heard words like, we're committed, we care, all these fluffy words and phrases. In actual fact, I'm just waiting for *Hansard* to come out because I'm actually going to look at them and tell the people of Postville what was said. There's no commitment.

One of the things I talked about when I'm talking about the petition is that in an emergency, for example, the nurse is called out and there are multiple casualties, a snowmobile accident or a fire, plane crash, who do you call to help you if you don't have a second nurse and there's no paramedics, no doctors, no health care professionals? Well, most people will say, and I've said it in the House when I was talking about the petition, who do you think? Automatically, you think well we can call the RCMP. We can call the police because they're trained in triage. They're trained in crowd control. They're trained as a vast medical responder to support the nurse. But in Postville that nurse don't have that ability to call the RCMP. This is just one petition that I'm talking about.

Other petitions talking about the cost of heating your home. Where's Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro? Where's Nalcor in the last 30 years? When we look at all the work that's been done globally to bring attention to carbon emissions impacting the environment, carbon emissions, fossil fuels being burned to create problems, bring about climate change. We knew 30 years ago that we had to start transitioning off.

In my communities, we have the diesel generating stations. When you plug in

something into an outlet in my northern communities, that electricity comes from diesel. Where was the work being done to transition us off these power generating stations? When you look at how much hydroelectricity is being generated in Labrador, how much power is being generated in Labrador that powers the island portion of our province? We have Upper Churchill, we have Muskrat Falls, but none of that hydroelectricity is going into my communities.

Where was Newfoundland Hydro, it's a Crown corporation, when they were doing all these developments, when they were doing all these initiatives? You just look at Muskrat Falls, how many billions of dollars was that over budget? But when we look at hydroelectricity, none of it came into my districts.

What about renewables? What about wind? What about solar? Is there any wind, any solar, any tidal? Because a lot of our communities have tidal action that would support tidal electricity generation. For us, we never had that. There was nothing done.

Now, the federal government is coming out with initiatives because we know that we have to transition off oil, we do. Whether people like it or not, it's going to have to happen and, like I said, climate change is actually becoming more of a reality, so the federal government is coming out with initiatives.

I went, and my colleague here came with me from Lab West, when we were talking to Newfoundland Hydro and I was asking about renewables to get us off the diesel generating stations. Speaker, you were actually with me as well. The three of us went in.

The thing is, they said that they can't do it. That, in actual fact, the Nunatsiavut Government, a small little self-government in Northern Labrador could apply. The Inuit Community Governments could apply. They

could actually access federal funds and build infrastructure, renewable energy, wind, solar and tidal. So it was up to Nunatsiavut. That's not their mandate. That's not a part of their self-government.

The self-government that they have autonomy over is limited in actual fact. Now, there's going to be some things transitioning over to Nunatsiavut like Education, things like that; Transportation is not, other services are not.

So when you look at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, how many engineers do they have? How many planners do they have? How many professional people do they have in all their offices across the province? I've asked this question before.

Then I called Nunatsiavut, I called the person who's trying to actually apply for funding from the federal government, plan and manage and develop and deliver the infrastructure for wind or solar or tidal and, at the time, there were two people; two people in their department working, compared to the thousands of people working for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. Who has the provincial mandate?

For me, it's really, really unfair and it's a lost opportunity over the Crown corporation. That would be enough, that would be discouraging, that would be like, okay, that don't seem right.

But another thing now, to help transition off fossil fuels, the province has come out with this cross the province rebate program to help residents, people in each of the communities, towns and cities in the province, everybody can apply. If you heat your home with oil, stove oil or furnace oil, you can get up to – at the time, the minister said \$17,000 to transition your home off stove oil, furnace oil. You have these more efficient heat pumps, baseboard heaters, everything now is becoming more modern,

more efficient, you could transition your house from oil to electric, but not in my district. We're not allowed to access the provincial-wide rebate program with these thousands of dollars.

Now, in actual fact, this past year, people in my communities have actually incurred the burden of the cost, the thousands and thousands of dollars and, in actual fact, it's much more than anyone can get it done on the Island or even in parts of Labrador, on the North Coast, because, of course, anyone who is going to do it you have to get them to fly in, you have to put them up, you have to pay for their hotel expenses, the travel expenses, the equipment, everything. It's more expensive, but they did it on their own, because the cost of oil is too expensive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Excuse me.

If I could just have everybody kind of just keep the conversation down a little bit. It's becoming difficult to hear the MHA.

Thank you.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just speaking in generalities on this budget now. I'm just trying to show that regardless of what's being said here in the House of Assembly, what's being advocated for, a lot of times we just run into barriers. Sometimes the barrier is because of lack of understanding, but many times it, basically, doesn't matter what you say, no matter what your position is, nothing is going to be done to help you.

Now, you might say, oh, that's because you're not on the same team; you're not on the same party as the established government. In actual fact, the former MHA was a part of the government when the freight boat was taken off.

I remember the Minister of Labrador Affairs and Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs spoke earlier on the budget. It was a good speech, but you referred to Muskrat Falls. In actual fact, the people in my district had a lot of issues about methylmercury contamination and the lack of remediation. There are many failures there that were supposed to be put in place according to the environmental assessment, according to all the hearings that they had and the former Member, who represented my District of Torngat Mountains, including the community of Rigolet, said that he was torn. He was torn. How could you be torn, when the people that elected you to represent them are telling you that they have all these concerns?

So, in actual fact, one of the things is you have to represent your district but, also, you have to ensure that the things you're doing are just and fair.

I don't have a lot of time, but I also want to talk a little bit about the Seniors' Advocate. One of the things that came out this year is titled: *What Golden Years?* I've got to compliment the Seniors' Advocate for the work that she's done across this province about travelling out to the different areas. I spoke on this before. She came to my district. She went to communities and if she couldn't get to the communities, she had elders from the community fly over to where she was having her meetings because she wanted to hear the concerns. She did that across the province. The issues that she raised are true issues of our elders, our seniors and how the cost of living is impacting them; how the failing of our social services and supports are failing them.

One of the things – I don't have much time – she was talking about the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit. She said it increased July 2022 by 10 per cent, and another 5 per cent, bringing it up by 15 per cent. But, in actual fact, she said the maximum benefit for these increases only equate to approximately \$200 a year. Two

hundred dollars a year, that probably would heat your house for a few days. Because, in actual fact, there are seniors heating their houses and sometimes they're burning 500 litres a week.

SPEAKER: Excuse me, the Member's time has expired.

Thank you very much.

I now call on the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to continue on with my discussion I had yesterday in the House. I just want to acknowledge a couple of viewers. I know it might seem like par for the course, but if they're watching and I know that I was in conversation with them, I just want to mention them. This one has a special connection. This is Randy and Bonnie Spurrell in Catalina. That's my hometown, down the peninsula, about 10, 11 kilometres from Bonavista.

Randy's sister, Renée, was watching in Musgravetown. The connection would be that their father taught me Grade 6 math. Now, I'll let people decide as to whether we did a good job or not, but anyway, he taught me –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: The hon. Member says he's questioning it already, but anyway.

I want to get in and I want to look at the theme of operational crisis and operational issues and I want to continue with that theme I had last year. But as Mr. Spurrell, as a good teacher he was, he would've had a little review before we get into some new material. So I'd just like to quickly have a quick review of what I mentioned yesterday, before I get in and continue on with some other suggestions I would have for the hon. government Members.

I was driving up the peninsula on January 4 – and before people say what a remarkable memory the Member has. That's not true because I wrote it down. I pulled over on the side of the road and I had a piece of paper and I wrote it down. It was *News Talk*, Linda Swain. Linda Swain was interviewing and chatting at the time with the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. I pulled over on the side of the road on Route 230 and I had the pen in hand and jotted a few notes down.

There was nothing new that was there that I didn't already know, but she said Newfoundland and Labrador put in tremendous effort into health and social programs. And what she usually does is she will say, here's the amount of money we put into it. I have to give the hon. minister credit, that's what she says, here is what we spent. And she said on this show: 15 per cent increase in Income supplement, 15 per cent increase in Seniors' Benefit, the home heating oil Supplement – and that is accurate; that's true.

Since then, I would read British Columbia would come out – ones we're talking about, she had mentioned child poverty, seniors, cost of living as three areas that they were addressing. But then BC would come out and BC says 54.5 per cent reduction in childhood poverty. The Spurrells now listening in Catalina would say, what's the difference? Well, the difference is that we've got a target. They've got a target in BC. So if we have one of every four children in Newfoundland and Labrador, what difference has it made with the money spent and what is the action? Where is the benefit and is it measurable? Now, is that a fair question to ask of government? What are the figures and what is it that we've improved for the money that we've spent?

The Minister of Tourism boasts about NASCAR being brought in, \$600,000 back then. But he said: Boy, good investment. When asked if it was a cost-benefit analysis, there is no cost-benefit analysis, not from

the government's part. So that doesn't mean it wasn't of value. All I would say, for those watching and for government, was we need some tangible data for the money we spent and what we spent.

Having targets that we have, that's where we should be. You spend money; we should have that target. I'm sure the minister is going to stand up later and if she can give us some data and some targets as to the amount of children that may be living now in food-insecure homes based on the money that the government has spent. What is the tangible improvement in that?

So I just wanted to throw that out and to review yesterday – this is the recap before we get into some new stuff. Yesterday I had mentioned about the federal government indexes their CPP and their Old Aged Security. They index it. The province doesn't. In their formula, the same figure they had back in '15-'16, they've got that formula. Your income passes that, as they federal government upkeep it, their income passes, you get less from the province. That's the way the formula works.

One senior said: Does the government think that we don't need more money living? How much does the government think we need to be able to survive out there? Well, let me give you some quick figures, and I may lose the audience now on these math figures. But these are two seniors not in my district, in one of the government Member's districts. No names used, but one – and the Member is sitting here now, but here is from two seniors.

My husband and I were talking about CPP the other day which got me thinking, who actually will be eligible to get the \$1,444, full amount of Newfoundland Seniors' Benefit? Who exactly would be eligible to get the full benefit of \$1,444?

I found this very interesting and somewhat enlightening. A senior couple who got only \$600 a month CPP would be entitled

\$960.65 a month, OAS, GIS, each – each. That is \$7,200 CPP, \$11,527 OAS and GIS. So really, that's about \$18,727.80 per year. Combined income of this couple \$37,455.60. About now, Mr. Spurrell will be looking at me and he would be very proud. My ex-math teacher, if he was alive today, he would looking and say b'y, I did okay with that Member.

The kicker in this is that according to the present NL Seniors' Benefit and low-income calculator that the government has, as a couple they will receive – remember, their income is \$37,455.60. Their income is \$411.23 – annually, of the max possible would be \$1,444 full amount, leaving the question, how low would your income have to be before you would even be eligible for the full amount of \$1,444?

Because in that formula, the divisor is not indexed. The minister was going to look at it last year and they were going to review it for the budget. They were going to look at that, but I would say to you nothing is changed. It's the same for a single as what it is for a double in that calculator. I would say those are real figures from two seniors in a Member's district opposite had presented. I don't want to table this evidence because the names are on it, but anyway that would be accurate.

I mentioned yesterday in review, child support. We've got 4,482 children out there in homes who receive child support payments. I suggested yesterday and I suggested in a petition last year, the government pay them on the first of the month. Money that comes in from the child support, in those 4,482, put it right into the government coffers to make up for what you provided at the first of the month for that single parent and children. I thought that's a pretty good idea. If not, have a look at it, let us know what the pitfalls would be, but it's going to give them money to pay their rent at the first of the month without it being trickling in over time, and that was another suggestion.

I mentioned about doors being locked on the operational side of Bonavista hospital. The Sunday before last, hospital closed, ambulance pulls up – they ought to have known – doors locked, on to Clarenville. Should not happen. That's an operational issue that the minister was going to look into last year.

The driver's road test, I would say to you then that's something that they should travel down to provide for those people. If you really want to think about the environment, send one car down instead of a group going up to Clarenville to do the road test in an unfamiliar area. Many don't want to drive the Trans-Canada. You send one man down and you have all those vehicles not driving to Clarenville, that would be an initiative.

Let me move on to some new things that I throw out there, in my short time left. Carbon tax: This government says while we voted for it, three years ago, right now we've had a change in mind. We've had a change of mind right now. We've had a change. But I would say, I'm curious, this government taxes the tax. I'd like to know how much does the government receive when they tax the sugar tax and when they tax the carbon tax? How much does the government bring in when they tax the tax from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are out there struggling now? How much do you get when you tax those taxes? That's the question. Maybe that can be arranged, that's an operational issue.

My colleague in Education in Question Period today for the minister, he had mentioned about the number of incidents that were in schools. In 2019, when I sat here at Estimates, or '20, '19 or '20, anyway, we had asked the minister at that time to forward us some of the statistics on sick leave. He didn't know. So he had the courtesy to send it to us.

Teacher sick leave: In 2014-15, teacher sick leave cost a little over \$15 million; 2015-16,

less than \$100,000 off \$17 million; 2016-17, sick leave close to \$18 million; 2017-18, \$17 million; '18-'19, over \$18 million.

I had asked in February if I can have an update on those figures, I'd like to have it to current because I think that speaks volumes. If we have a high amount of stress and teachers off work, that means that the environment may be questionable. I made a request in February. In March, the government officials were kind enough to ask back if I could send them a copy of what I received, which I did. That was in March, but I do look forward to getting that back to get those figures that would be updated.

Food banks in Bonavista are increasing, but I'm not going to have much time – a steady increase. I'll give that data some other time.

Here are some other suggestions. Our tendering process: I presented a petition on tendering saying that the process is flawed. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they have a report card and they give Newfoundland and Labrador a failing grade on red tape. Now that was stated before, of all the provinces, it was a failing grade in red tape.

Let me give you a couple of examples from the District of Bonavista. This lady applied for the Trinity Train Loop, a businessperson, started in 2013 for the vacant land, looking for it. She sent a letter to the minister in 2018. In 2021, she was informed that it was going to an RFP. In 2023, an RFP was issued. October 6 of last year, she phone called with no return call. But recently she found out that the \$8,000 she spent to put in a bid on that land wasn't acceptable. If there were others, it wasn't acceptable. It lies vacant now, still.

I just want to give you one more doozy. On October 27, 2020, we had a business group in Bonavista apply for rental space. They responded to a call for proposals for rental space from CSSD, a fleet of offices they needed. He had vacant offices, so he kept

them vacant. He contacted me several times and said can you contact the government to find out where it is. He had to lay down \$8,000 as a deposit – a mere \$8,000. Well, anyway, spring of 2023, he was notified that he wasn't successful. Go ahead and rent because you're not successful.

I would say the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses give you an F grade. These two couples would give you an F grade too, just based on these two incidents, and they are accurate – they are accurate.

Affordable houses: We had a meeting with Crown Lands. We just passed a little bit on the municipalities and LSDs, no mention on anything to do with Crown Lands. We have municipalities out there with vacant buildings in a poor state, disarray, but Crown Lands won't give them clearance to go ahead and move the property because we have not updated the legislation as the Member for Exploits has been asking for ages on Crown lands. We haven't seen it. Is it coming? Stay tuned is what people say – stay tuned.

Cancer patients: My hon. Member talks so eloquently about daffodils and cancer, where we are. Well, for two years now cancer patients in Bonavista who always had their chemo treatments in Bonavista, they haven't been able to do that yet. For two years now, they have had to travel over an hour and a half to get their chemo. Why can't it be offered in Bonavista? That's an operational issue. Why can't it not be offered in Bonavista, as it always was? I would say that is an operational issue. I wear the daffodil and I know we all do, but I would say that is another symptom of an operational issue that we have.

Family doctors: I don't know if we have any now in the District of Bonavista. If we do, I think we have one semi-retired in Catalina. But that's where we are. The residents in the District of Bonavista know that their

names are on the Patient Connect list because the minister said make sure your name is on the Patient Connect list. But what the residents in Bonavista don't know is that the only way they're going to access a family physician on the Patient Connect list is if we got a family physician in the District of Bonavista. You get a new doctor move into Clarenville – which is the hospital that when the doors are locked we have to go to – you can't go up there, the list is not going to help you out, because once you pass Lethbridge, your postal code doesn't make you eligible to travel for a doctor who may come to Clarenville. That is an operational issue.

Fresh water: The hon. Member attended the Estimates for Environment and Climate Change last night and we talked about the importance of water. We've got communities in our district with 20 households on community wells. I've asked before can we get some assistance or some mechanisms that can help in maintaining their wells? Not forthcoming; operational issue.

I look forward to another time, I've got a few more issues to continue and that should be the next time I get to speak.

Thank you very much for your attention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now call on the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I know earlier I touched on seniors in Labrador West and the growing population of seniors in Labrador West. You just go down to the 50-plus club and you can quite see the very large, active community of seniors that has built up over the last number of years.

I know growing up there, having someone's nan or anything like that living in Lab West was rare and far and few between, but now the population of seniors that decided to continue to live in the area and buck the trend of moving out after they were done their work has expanded and it has created a more sense of community.

We're an aging community, but we're becoming more mature in our age. Lab West is only 70 years old. It's significantly younger than many of the communities in the rest of the province but, at the same time, we've become more of a community, we've become holistic, we've become more in demographic like the rest of the province, but doing that, there are no services for seniors.

Seniors' housing is not a thing. I'd like it to be a thing. I hope that we can work towards to make it a thing, but right now, as I said, seniors' housing is not a thing. Then even when it comes to the different stages of care, we don't have any private seniors' care for anything in level 2 or 3 and we have 12 beds in the hospital that are for long-term care.

So we're not there. The services available do not match the demographics of the community and that's something that we wanted to see, but we clearly don't see it in the budget, is to help with the growing population of seniors in Labrador West. There are a lot of services and stuff available throughout the rest of the province, but it's not available to us. We just want to be treated fairly and equally like the rest of the province when it comes to caring for our seniors.

We do have an active community, but we also have an aging community, and we need to actually incorporate that. That's creating that we want to be able to have the ability to keep our seniors in our community –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting a little too high. I can't hear the speaker.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate it.

We can keep going with that the trend, but we need to actually have in place the same services that are available to everyone else in the province. We need seniors' housing. We need different levels of care. We're absent when it comes to home care. There is not even a home care provider in Labrador West.

There are a few people that are doing it privately, but we don't even have the same kind of thing as the rest of the province. There is no home care agency or anything in Labrador West right now. There are a few private people that are doing it and it's becoming an issue, especially those seniors in our community that are trying to stay in place. They are trying to stay in their homes as long as they can, but it's becoming a real issue.

I know individuals that, like I've said before, they want to stay. They have their grandkids and their families and everything around them, but they ended up having to move to a community they don't even know, they've never been to in their life, but they're moving out towards the Northeast Avalon just so they can have access to the same things that they wish they could have in their home, where they grew up and spent their life, in Labrador West.

So these are things I would like to see. I don't see any of the allocations or anything like that to actually help bring us up to par with the rest of the province. It's not there. We want to keep our sense of community. We want to be able to keep down the path that we're going in the sense that we want to be able to expand and grow as a

community and be on par with the rest of the province when it comes to the services that we can provide. I understand, once again, I said it here (inaudible) we don't want a specialist on every corner, but we want to have fair and equal access just like everyone else has access to.

We have a different type of industry that the rest of the province don't have. We're in the iron ore mining business. We're mining on a massive scale. It's quite impressive in a sense but we've been doing it for 70 years now. Labrador City-Wabush, we're not going anywhere. We have massive, untapped amounts of resources still left in the area. We have dedication and that.

The changing markets of minerals is actually putting us in a better place. A place that has made a name for itself in 70 years is going to continue to make a name for itself in the region. With that, we have a changing demographic that we also need to attend to. At the same time, we have people wanting to come to Lab West, to move up there, take advantage of the growing economic prosperity that we have. They're offered jobs. They're all for that. It's the same thing that, once again, they can't get into any affordable housing. The rental market has nothing. There's not a single rental unit to be had and there's nothing really even available on the real estate market when it comes to purchasing.

At the same time, we want to see commitment and opportunity from the province to actually help our municipalities grow so that we can continue to grow economically and as a community. We have so much potential when it comes to these things and we want the province to be a partner in this. We have an ability to grow. We have an ability to do that. We want to see the province come as a partner into this opportunity. We also want to see the province come in with all the other things that the rest of the province gets to enjoy.

It's a very interesting place to be when you see prosperity but, at the same time, we're just not seeing the level of investment and the players. We understand that it's a team effort. We do have the municipalities. We do have the mining companies and we need the province and the federal government at the table to do this. You know, it's been disappointing time and time again to see the federal government continue to turn us down for applications when it came to affordable housing. We see that even in the federal budget there was some stuff there, but at the same time it still doesn't really fit the model and what we're looking for in housing. At the same time, we turn to the provincial government to kind of fill that gap.

I know the Reaching Home plan, five applications, five denials. It was an absolute mess to deal with and now we turn to the province to say the federal government is not going to help us. We need help from them and the municipalities and other groups to step up and kind of fill that gap where the federal government fell down, terribly.

We want to see this. We want to see the ability of affordable housing. Seniors' housing is one aspect of it, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is another aspect of it, but there's also a gap in the private market that needs to be filled as well. That's where we need to see funding from an infrastructure side of things for the municipalities to be able to make sure that land is available affordably and that development is affordable that it actually kind of fills that niche as well.

I understand it's not an easy solution to fix in anything, especially the complicated place when it comes to like Labrador West or anything like that, but we need partners, we need an open mind and not trying to ram the square peg in the round hole. We need to actually work on making a peg that will fit for that particular solution.

Not all problems are created equally, I should say, either. There are complexities there, but that's what we were hoping for and that's what we're hoping to see is that we need to have this flexibility and this thing to fill in this market. Unfortunately, we don't have developers banging on the door to come into Labrador West and build houses. Like I said previously when I stood here, there is a such thing as the Labrador tax. A little more in Labrador.

It's unfortunate that that is how it has to be. When we were actually the mainland part of the province with a direct highway connecting directly to Quebec City, you figure that the transportation needs wouldn't be so much but for some reason, I guess, they want to charge us that extra fee to get up there. Even though I can get to Quebec City and Montreal faster than I can get to here in St. John's to sit in my seat in the House of Assembly.

That's another issue for another day, I guess, is the logistics of what the transportation industry is and how I don't think that's fair. But, at the same time, there is such thing as this Labrador tax that is unfortunate to us, that where things are more expensive, developing is more expensive and this is where we need to have the federal government's understanding but also the provincial government's understanding on it's not the same. A program executed here on the Island of Newfoundland is not the same as a program in Labrador. It's not a one-size-fits-all solution. We need to have that understanding and that capability to actually execute programs and to do things, with the understanding that you're doing it in Labrador.

We're just talking about Labrador West here. If you want to talk about the complexities of it, then talk to my colleague from Torngat Mountains or even my colleague from Lake Melville or my colleague from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. Most programming that you find that the

province issues, sometimes – not all the time, but sometimes – it just doesn't fit the mode of Labrador. That's where we need to have that understanding and capability to be flexible and to be able to turn on a dime, as they say, because we want to be able to do this. That's what I'm not seeing. I'm not seeing that little bit of give for us to actually fit into these programs sometimes. Once again, we want to be able to be fair and transparent and to get this done.

I have a shelter there that only has three beds in it. I think it's the smallest shelter in the province right now, three beds. It's full every night, day in, day out. We've talked about expanding it. I'm hopeful that somewhere along the way it gets done, that that request that was put in multiple times gets done. We do have a serious problem with homelessness, especially the ones that mostly are single males. It seems to be a growing issue in Labrador West. People who've come to the region looking for work, looking for different things, find themselves down on their luck. Most times there are also addictions issues here. But they seem to be the ones that I get the calls from the most, the ones that can't find a place and the shelter is always full. We have to take that into consideration.

The shelter in Lab West doesn't have wraparound services, which is unfortunate because it needs a bit more of that kind of work done because we do have a lot of issues when it comes to that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask again that the Members to keep the conversation down a little bit. It's hard to hear the speaker.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker, much appreciated again.

We have to talk about wraparound services when it comes to this kind of thing in Labrador West, when it comes to the housing and homelessness. We have a certain demographic that seems to be most predominant when it comes to homelessness right now. I think that a serious look needs to be taken at that. We know wraparound services, these individuals, they need help, both in finding appropriate housing and help sometimes finding and navigating mental health and addictions treatment. Once again, I bring up the fact that Labrador does not have an addictions treatment facility. This is where we need to actually go and have a conversation about: it's time to bring that into Labrador so people can have more timely access to addictions treatment.

But back to the thing with the shelter, we need that expanded and we need to add wraparound services and supports. The addictions issues in Labrador West have been an issue for many, many years. I think at this point in time now, if we're going to keep growing as a community, we're going to see larger paycheques out of the mining industry, we're going to see a lot more of that. We're also going to see a rise in addictions once again.

We saw it in 2014, 2013, it was a huge issue there and it led to a lot more other mental health issues in the region. We're going to go down the same path if we don't put in – if we didn't learn from our mistakes last time, we're just going to repeat them again in the future. This is where I think we have to have a large conversation about the time is now to put addictions treatment in Labrador. So this is where we're at.

Back to the shelter and its wraparound supports. Once again, mental health services need to be there as well. There are also supports of helping these people find permanent solutions to housing, permanent solutions of where they can be put into a home that is theirs, that is safe and they'll

be able to enjoy it and not find themselves once again homeless.

We look at the wait-lists in Labrador West, it always continues to grow in the sense that a lot of the housing market that we need in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in Labrador West is two bedroom and one bedroom. Unfortunately, at the time in the '80s, when most of the houses were built, they were built for three bedrooms and a few one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments. But the three bedrooms outweighed the one bedroom. Obviously, the demographics of the entire province have changed. We have smaller families and a lot of single individuals.

So the solution here is obviously to build what was lost. Obviously, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in the '90s sold off most of their units in Labrador West and now we're stuck with a large wait-list and a lot of inappropriate housing. Obviously, we know that there are some that are going to be built, but, at the same time, is it going to be enough? Is what's going to be built actually going to clear up the wait-list? From my understanding, it's not going to clear up the wait-list. There will be a few units built, but it won't build everything to clear up the wait-list. Obviously, we continue to see the wait-list grow in Labrador West. So maybe this is a conversation: Are we actually building enough to actually fix the problem or are we doing just enough to patch it for now?

That is where I have the problem dealing with it; we're not putting in enough units into the region. We have a broader conversation on, yes, what Newfoundland and Labrador Housing's units is going to do, but, at the same time, this is an opportunity for the other departments and the other things to have solutions when it comes to municipalities and stuff to get into the private sector, because there is a large need for private sector construction in Labrador West as well.

So this is an opportunity that I think is being lost: How do we do this holistically in the sense that we're encouraging both Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to do what they're supposed to do and they're mandated to do, but, at the same time, to also go in and make sure that anything else that's building or the ability to actually work with the municipalities to put in other affordable options to the region?

We have a huge issue here when it comes to housing. We have people that are living with other families, multiple families, doubling up, stuff like that. That's happening. These people are trying to find housing. They don't qualify for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but they're also not making Rio Tinto or Tacora wages. They're stuck, trapped in the middle and, at the same time, we're not seeing any production towards that.

A lot of the programs and stuff that went out in the past didn't fit the mould of Labrador West. I know that there was a call put out for a program last year but there was no uptake from Labrador West because the program didn't fit what was going on in the region at the time and also with the challenges with the infrastructure and the Labrador tax, once again, on the costs of goods and services in the region, it just didn't fit the mould.

Hopefully, a lesson learned from that is we have more programming and more stuff that actually can be turned on a dime to fit the region. At the same time, is have a northern and rural plan designed to actually have those tweaks made in place to fit places like Labrador West, Torngat Mountains, Lake Melville, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and, in some case, the Northern Peninsula? They also have challenges when it comes to extra costs and stuff for doing business because it's rural, it's remote, it's northern. We understand it's a bit different and we like it. We like being northern and rural and remote because that's what makes us so different.

At the same time, we actually need programming and stuff that will be able to turn on a dime, to be able to fit rural and remote and northern places like us and actually be able to provide the services that a lot of other people get to enjoy. Unfortunately, in our case in Labrador West and other places, we don't have the same opportunity to enjoy because we don't get it.

We need to actually look at more holistic approaches when it comes to housing, holistic approaches when dealing with Labrador. It's a different beast. It's a different place to work. It's a different place to do business and we need to actually take that into consideration when we're making decisions on a provincial budget level.

This is the whole thing now. There are opportunities but we have to find ways to work on the opportunities. If you want to attract doctors and attract nurses and stuff into these rural, remote communities, we have to look at how we are providing services to those northern and remote communities because those individuals have to live in that community as well. If they're going to go into a region to work and spend their lives and hopefully raise a family and everything like that in that region, they're also going to expect some of the services that are found everywhere else.

So how am I supposed to attract doctors in Labrador West when I can't find a house for them? If they have any senior parents with them, they've got nowhere to go. If they have children, how are they going to go to school when the school has no teachers? How are they supposed to be able to do any of this stuff?

The cost of flights is almost \$1,200 or \$1,300 for one individual to fly out of the region. Who is going to go into these regions, who had a different standard of living and are going to go up to these northern places? I know they understand they're going to Labrador, there are going to be some differences, but it can't be such a

dramatic difference that it's almost two different worlds. These are services and things that are provided that were never like that. It was never \$1,200 or \$1,300 to fly in and out of Lab West; it used to be a reasonable rate. There was a time when I was first out of college where, 500 bucks I can get to St. John's and back from Lab West to come down and see my friends that were going to university out here, and now it's almost that plus \$1,000.

It's not that it was unheard of or anything different; it's a time that we're seeing gouging and we're seeing the treatment of how the different regions of the province are. This is the thing we have to take a look at. Are we treating each region fairly? Are we treating each other fairly? Are the programs and the services that are being provided equal or equitable to what's going on in the region?

If I want to attract doctors and you want to attract nurses, you want to attract all these developers and you want to attract them all to a region, you have to look at the region and go is the programming, is the services, is the thing that we're providing actually matching the region of the province. You have to look at the holistic approach of how things work and how we're going to do it.

That's what I'm not seeing. I haven't seen it yet. I haven't seen it in the five years that I was here. It's these, you know, trying to stick the square peg in the round hole. It's the trying to make something that was clearly for the Northeast Avalon fit somewhere in Labrador West; it's not going to work. That's why we need to actually take a look and go maybe we need to divide it up and look at northern and rural and remote kind of programming and stuff that fits here and the Northeast Avalon, because this is the only way we're going to make this work.

It's the only way we're going to make any of this programming, make any of the housing stuff, the recruitment stuff. Anything that will work has to be a more holistic approach and

consideration for different regions of this province. That's the only way we're going to do it, and we want to be a fair and equal part of it. Lab West has been the crown jewel in economic development of this province but, once again, you're squandering it. You're squandering the ability of what our region can provide to this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Why thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak again this week when it refers to our amendment, when it comes to the budget and, of course, it's a great opportunity to get up and speak about great things in your district, speak about great things happening across the province but also to speak about the things that need attention across the province, and we all know that there are plenty of those.

I touched on it this week so far about the Volunteer Week and how much we all appreciate our volunteers throughout our communities. I think somebody said it early: Where would Newfoundland and Labrador be without our volunteers? It's absolutely amazing to see how they step up, how they give their time for something for the greater good of their community, and my God, it's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Yeah, it's fantastic, and it saves the province a ton of money as well. I mean, you can imagine how much money it would cost for certain programs, certain events and whatnot but when we have great people here in Newfoundland and Labrador stepping up – what can you say? It's phenomenal.

I have a few fire departments in my district, not like some of the districts around here, but we have the Grand Falls-Windsor Volunteer Fire Department. I've served on several volunteer fire departments in the past, but Grand Falls-Windsor is something quite special. Sure, it's a volunteer department but it runs as organized as a paid department. There are other departments across the province that do that, but at Grand Falls-Windsor have their paid dispatchers and whatnot.

When they show up every single week they are entrenched, whether it be a training night or a community event, these firefighters are entrenched and by God if they see him out raising money, you know what they're raising money for. They're raising money to ensure the safety of you and your families inside your households at 3:15 in the morning.

They need the equipment to ensure that they can save you and your family at a moment's notice, to ensure that they protect themselves. So if you ever see them out there and you can afford the \$2 or \$5, whatever to fill the boot, make sure that you stop in, thank a firefighter and let them know that they have your support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Another very, very fantastic group in my district are the Special Olympics. Anybody who's involved with Special Olympics across this province know how gratifying and how beneficial it is to volunteer with that group.

Again, that was one my favourite events to volunteer for was the Special Olympics. Out in Grand Falls-Windsor with the Exploits Hurricanes, we have some phenomenal athletes. Melvin Hanhams, for instance – not to just point anybody out but Melvin Hanhams, world golf champion right here in Grand Falls-Windsor –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – and that's fantastic. We're so happy to have him there.

Of course, Liam, Rhonda, everybody out there that partakes in Special Olympics, but it's the coaches, Joe Tremblett. Joe Tremblett is a coach for Special Olympics and he's been around these athletes day and night for years and years and years and he's brought those athletes to where they need to be and we couldn't be more happy to have Joe Tremblett with us in Grand Falls-Windsor. We are very fortunate.

The Lions Club, another fantastic group. I know that the Member for Exploits has been involved with the Lions for many, many years now. But they do so many great things around the community. A couple of weeks ago, I went up to Badger for their opening night. Their opening night is called – what is it?

AN HON. MEMBER: Charter night.

C. TIBBS: Charter night, sorry, yes. The Lions Club Charter night in Badger and what a turnout. Now that they have their Lions Club up there, I know that they're going to entrench themselves within the community there and do the great things that the Lions Club have been known to do in the past.

We have the Rotary in Grand Falls-Windsor. I know they're across the world, one of the biggest organizations all throughout the world. The Rotary do great things throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in Grand Falls-Windsor.

The Central Newfoundland Hospital Auxiliary, that's a group of 33 ladies over the years, I think, and I'm going to do Member's statement about them later on but I want to give them a little shout-out here for Volunteer Week. They have raised over \$1.5 million –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: – to buy equipment for the hospital in Grand Falls-Windsor.

They put that money towards health care where we need it and that's absolutely amazing. They show up, they do their bake sales, they run the gift shop downstairs in the hospital, and again, if you can support the auxiliary there, there's nothing like it.

There are numerous sports organizations and coaches throughout Grand Falls-Windsor and Buchans and Badger and everything else. And, of course, a big one, the Lionel Kelland Hospice fundraising team. It's just a coincidence but they started a couple of years ago and their motto as well is Every Moment Matters. When you're talking about hospice care, somebody's very short experience, every moment matters there to the family and to the patient.

I touched on it this week that we have received our first patient inside the Lionel Kelland Hospice, and again, Dr. John Campbell, Ken Dicks and Dr. Jeff Cole and the phenomenal work they did out there. It started the vision 10 years ago and that committee has raised well in excess of a million dollars to ensure that the Lionel Kelland Hospice is open and that it will remain functional and operational, and we are so proud to have the first community hospice right here in Grand Falls-Windsor. I'm so happy to represent them as well.

If I can move on to a couple of things here, we talk about the sugar tax quite often. A few people have mentioned it here. When we first brought in the sugar tax last year, the goal was to get more people to buy another beverage, have another selection, an alternative. If that were the case, if we came back this year and we seen that we brought in a million dollars to the coffers, well by God it worked. Okay, it worked, and I would accept that at the time, but we know now that we tried it, it doesn't work. It –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Okay, but it doesn't work.

We did not expect to take in the money that we took in. We did not. Did it take people off sugar? That's the question. The same people that were drinking sugar before, are they still drinking sugar? They are, so maybe it's time to go back to the drawing board and come up with something different. Come up with another suggestion.

If anybody has any suggestions, I'd like to hear them as well. Right now, if the Premier stands today and he says we're lobbying Ottawa to cut that tax because it's not the right time for Newfoundland and Labrador to pay more taxes, shouldn't that include the sugar tax?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: The same logic for writing letters to the prime minister and asking him not to dip his hands into the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that need every cent right now. The same logic should apply to the sugar tax in my mind.

AN HON. MEMBER: Write a letter to themselves.

C. TIBBS: Write a letter to themselves, absolutely.

And that's something. When we look at the carbon tax, of course we had a vote here. That side of the House voted yes; we voted no on the carbon tax. That's the facts at this time. We voted no when it came to a carbon tax vote; the government voted yes at that time. I mean, you can say now all you want that we don't agree with this sort of thing. We don't agree with it. But, at the time, there was a vote. That vote was made clear and, listen, we all agree, climate change is real, 100 per cent. But are we willing to destroy our economy for it? Are we willing to dip our hands into the pockets of people that can't feed their youngsters because we want to modify anybody's behaviour? No, absolutely not.

I'm going to go as far as to say that a tax is regressive, and we don't need it for a carbon tax. It is not just a delay; we don't want a delay for a carbon tax. We've talked about it many times. We have paid our carbon tax. The government party across the way, they use this word many times and I'm going to use it now: Muskrat Falls.

We are paying our carbon tax to the Dominion of Canada. We have it. We are going to pay for a super project that's going to be passed down to our kids and our grandkids, and it is a great project that we're going to pass down to them. But the fact that we have to pay for that now: You're welcome, Canada, that's our carbon tax. Two mega hydro projects and that's what should be considered to be our carbon tax.

When you talk about big cities, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, the list goes on and on, there are so many different alternatives when it comes to not taking your car, not filling up your car and going. There are buses, subways, railways, Ubers, taxis and everything else. There is not one person that can take a subway or any alternative route from Buchans down to Grand Falls-Windsor to Dominion to get their groceries. They have to do that.

So are they given an alternative with this carbon tax? Is that what it's for? Because they don't have an alternative. They do not have an alternative. Unfortunately, that is what they're pinned with. That's what the people across Newfoundland and Labrador are pinned with. It is not a modification behaviour; it's a punishment. It's a punishment. That's exactly what it is.

Listen, Newfoundland and Labrador has a very distinct geography and we need to ensure that we include that in the conversation when we do have these conversations when it comes to taxes and everything else.

Just talking about Buchans there, we talked about cell service across the province. It is a

huge, huge deal. It is a huge deal across the Buchans highway, too. I hear about numerous people breaking down in the middle of the night. There have been moose accidents up there where people couldn't get a hold of somebody. If it's the middle of the night, you can be hours before somebody else is going up and down that Buchans Highway. That's something that we should really – and, of course, it's not an easy answer but it needs to be addressed and it needs to be addressed in the future.

Buchans also has applied this year for a fire pumper. I know that it's not a very large budget when it comes to the firefighting services and the firefighting equipment and my colleague from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis there, he alluded to it today about the SCBAs. I spoke to the minister as well and he's aware of it and he wants to do everything he can, but it's going to be a huge price tag. The Member for Cape St. Francis talked about just his district today, but you extrapolate that across the province – 6,000 firefighters – we need to find a solution to that sooner than later because we cannot have firefighters with faulty equipment or no equipment.

The Buchans Fire Department, of course, applied for a fire pumper this year. They do need it. It is a small town, there's no doubt about it, but you do need to look at what's happening up there. The resources that they're pulling out of the ground, the heavy trucks that are going up and down there, the heavy equipment for the mining project that's going to see a lot more traffic in the next couple of years. Also, the logging trucks are constant – constant, constant, constant – going up and down. It's a narrow highway. The highway is literally falling apart. Eventually, you're going to see craters and it can't be driven on. It's going to cost us a lot more money then.

I'm hoping the minister can find some money in there for the Buchans Highway. Again, I've talked about it this week. It's not fair to the citizens that they have to drive on

a highway that's being used by such heavy trucks. I mean, we get it. We're happy to have the work there. We're happy to have the projects but if there is some formula we can find that takes money out of the coffers to put into repairment for these communities where these megaprojects are taking place, I think that would be a great start.

But getting back to Buchans, their fire truck, they need a fire pumper up there because if there's going to be more traffic, more people, it's going to be a lot busier and we need to ensure that the drivers up there are taken care of. If there are any fires up there, that that's taken care of as well.

The forestry in Central Newfoundland and Labrador – and my colleague from Exploits talks about it quite a bit. We have people out there who have been cutting wood for 60 years and cannot get a permit now. Because of the allocations, they cannot get a permit now. I will go on record in saying that I even support the big companies that are coming out there. We want free enterprise out there. We want to ensure that people do good business out there. They employ people out there.

I'm not saying anything about that but if you took the allotment that these bigger companies are getting and you narrowed that down to 90 per cent and you took the 10 per cent of the allotment or allocation and distributed to the smaller people throughout Central that have been there their whole lives, that are third-generation wood cutters or wood processors, I don't think that that would take a huge amount out of the coffers of these bigger companies that are coming in to Central. I truly believe that, in fairness, we could look at that allocation and set aside 10 per cent, just 10 per cent for the people out there that want to cut wood who have been doing it all of their lives. That's something that we would really like to see.

P. FORSEY: Five years' time, it's all gone.

C. TIBBS: Yeah, exactly. I mean, it's crazy and speaking about that as well, we have fire season coming up. We have fire season just around the corner. We want to ensure that our water bombers are ready, prepared. They're mechanically ready for the skies to do what they need to do. We have the pilots. We have the support staff.

A couple of years ago that fire got pretty close to Grand Falls-Windsor, Bishop's Falls. All the outlying communities, there were evacuation orders. We don't want to see that happen again. So, of course, through technology we know that we can detect fires a little bit sooner and if we can get a water bomber in the sky without having to wait for a pilot or anything else, we're hoping that the Minister of Transportation ensures that we do have that for this summer and for future coming up. The time is crucial, absolutely, time is crucial.

J. DWYER: The minister is over there nodding his head.

C. TIBBS: It's good.

Rocky Brook Road Bridge is a bridge up in Badger Lake. Many people live in there and there are a lot of cottages. But there are a lot of families that live up there. That is their permanent residence right there. The province basically abandoned that bridge. They said it wasn't fit to drive on anymore. They got the barricades up there. All right, you're done.

We've been months reaching out to the minister's office now, about two months, looking for some direction, some meeting, some suggestions on what they can do, because they do not have fair access now to their cottages. Just a little while ago, an ambulance showed up and stopped at the abutment of the bridge. The person who needed the ambulance had to carry his wife across the bridge in order to get them into the ambulance, with help of the ambulance. That's not good enough.

Thankfully she was okay, but in the future if there is an emergency up there and somebody needs to get up there – we just talked about it, what if there's a fire up there? People need to get in there.

These lots were bought in good faith, being told that you'll have year-round access. You're good. This bridge will be open. It's right off the highway. Not a problem at all and now the people that use Rocky Brook Road Bridge are being ignored. Now listen, if you can't come up with a solution, that's one thing. If you dig your heels in, you try to work with the people up there and you can't come up with a solution, you can't come up with something that's viable for everybody, that's one thing. But to be ignored, that's another thing, and it's not good enough. It's not good enough. I don't understand it.

I've dealt with a lot of good ministers that get back to me one way or another, but this that's been going on for these past few months now, they've been reached out to by many, many people that live up there. I don't understand it, personally. All you have to do is say there's nothing we can do, or let's work together.

By the way, the citizens that live up there, they have already brought their recommendations. They have sat down and come up with several options for government to do with that bridge, whether it be fix it, put in a replacement, rent another one. They've already done their homework. They've done government's work and they've presented it to government several times. They can't get a phone call back. I don't understand that.

Listen, I've said it numerous times, I don't need to bring anything to this floor, if I can work with a minister, get that thing fixed and that's where it should be done. Unfortunately, these people can't get a call back right now and it's sad. But we're going to keep on them. We're not going to quit, I can guarantee you. I stand with these

citizens until they can get the answer that they need.

The Member for Exploits brought it up yesterday, I believe, about the Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor. We're looking to save money, to allocate money elsewhere and we talk about the Premier's office, a million dollars over four years. That's a lot of money.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

C. TIBBS: A million dollars over four years.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

C. TIBBS: Yes.

That office is right above mine – it is right above mine. It's empty more often than not. It's empty way more often than not. I'm not sure what they're doing up there, but that million dollars, what could that go towards? The Lionel Kelland Hospice right there. We had a fundraising team working their butts off for years to try to raise the same money that's being put into the Premier's office right now. Does that make sense? It doesn't make sense to me.

Food banks are overrun in Grand Falls-Windsor. When it comes to childhood poverty, there are youngsters going to be without food. I can think on a dozen places where that million dollars can go.

Seniors' home care: We've been turned down for extra home care hours. I've stood here and talked about certain people in my district that their home care hours stopped at midnight and then picked up again at 8 a.m. Well, how are they supposed to get up in the middle of the night to go use the washroom? It's just beyond me.

Of course, we talked about the roadwork there. It's just not good enough. In the big picture of things, it might not seem like a million dollars is a lot, but it is and it can go a long way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We talk about the nurses and doctors and support staff. I'm going to talk about the LPNs for a quick moment. The LPNs are looking for a reclassification. Their duties have been astronomically much larger than they have been in the past. They need to step up. Where we are short on nurses and certain tasks can't be done, an LPN will fill that role. We're so happy to have them, but they want to be rightfully compensated for the extra work that they are taking on and we want to ensure that gets done sooner than later. I talked to the minister's department; they say they are working on it. We look forward to that. So you LPNs out there, we really, really hope that you get your reclassification soon.

Last 30 seconds, I'll say this, we brought up stuff about the budget, we're always asked why we're not voting yes for the budget, yada, yada, yada. I cut a lot of wood in my district. I was looking for a new chainsaw. A buddy of mine tried to sell me his chainsaw. It was 18 inches, carbs were good, everything was good, chain was good, beautiful chainsaw. I started it the first time. I need a 22-inch bar and not an 18-inch bar. That's why I didn't buy that chainsaw and that's why, if this budget comes up short for my people, I'll be voting no on the budget, as well.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, 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, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.