



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLIX

FIRST SESSION

Number 48

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

Thursday

October 1, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we have Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Harbour Main, Windsor Lake, St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise and Placentia West - Bellevue.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

It is an honour to be in this House and share with all hon. Members the remarkable accomplishments of a sea cadet in my District of Harbour Main. Chief Petty Officer First Class James Howse, who resides in Harbour Main, is a cadet with 251 Southern Cross Sea Cadets.

Mr. Speaker, the cadet program aims to develop youth, ages 12 to 18, in the attributes of good citizenship, leadership, physical fitness and stimulate an interest of youth in the sea, army and air activities of the Canadian Armed Forces. The program is funded by the Department of National Defence in partnership with the Navy League of Canada and the Army and Air Cadet Leagues of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 53,000 cadets right across this country. Chief Petty Officer First Class James Howse has recently been awarded the Navy League division Cadet of the Year for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the national Royal Canadian Legion Cadet of the Year and the Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating James Howse, who is also in his first year at Memorial University pursuing an engineering degree.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the Tim Hortons at 10 Tailwind Drive, Airport Heights, in my District of Windsor Lake, who raised a record-breaking \$12,972 in Smile Cookie sales for our province. A portion of the proceeds went to the Rainbow Riders, an organization which provides an inclusive environment that allows children and adults with varying physical, emotional, cognitive or social disabilities or diagnoses in a learn-to-ride program.

The Gathering Place – a community health centre committed to building community by promoting equality and providing food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental assistance and counselling services to vulnerable individuals within our city and province – was the other beneficiary of these sales.

Thank you to those that purchased cookies – I was one of them – for your generosity and support in making the 2020 Tim Hortons Smile Cookie campaign a huge success throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Muhammad Ali said: "Even the greatest was once a beginner. Don't be afraid to take that first step."

This summer, with bank financing and the support of the City of St. John's, the Avalon Minor Hockey Association, or AMHA, took a first step in making hockey more affordable and accessible for families when it proudly completed the purchase of Feildian Gardens in my district.

Historically, the AMHA was the province's only association renting ice from a for-profit company and paid the highest ice time rates in minor hockey, resulting in the highest youth hockey registration fees in the province.

The purchase of Feildian Gardens allows them to: control its destiny and promote the growth of hockey; access prime ice times at favourable rates; access government funding and support programs. Most of all, long-term debt-free ownership will allow the AMHA to lower operating costs and ice time rates and significantly reduce registration fees, something the association hopes to achieve in five to seven years.

I ask that Members join me in congratulating Mark Sexton, the executive and the staff of AMHA on their purchase of Feildian Gardens, and in wishing them well as they prepare to welcome the first kids to their new rink this Monday, October 5.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, while there have been negative stories during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are also some positive things that have happened in response in the District of Topsail - Paradise.

Mr. Speaker, the District of Topsail - Paradise has its own Amazing Spider-Man.

Mr. Robbie Griffiths of Paradise had been getting plenty of attention for his efforts to put a smile on people's faces during the pandemic, in an effort to change the conversation. Robbie, in his off time, had been donning a Spider-Man suit and prowling the streets of Paradise where kids were on the lookout. From a safe distance, he greeted the children and sometimes posed with them for photos.

One of the people that Spider-Man met was Toby, son of Paradise resident Stephanie Wood. Ms. Wood describes her son as mildly obsessed with Spider-Man and as a result of that meeting she has a video of Toby and Spider-Man dancing the floss. Stephanie said Robbie did this simply because he wanted to make people smile and create some light in a very dark time.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in thanking Mr. Griffiths, also known as the Amazing Spider-Man, for putting smiles on everyone's faces.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I speak today of a courageous man, a man with great determination and community spirit, to tell you of an accomplishment of Mr. Kevin Parsons of Black River-Swift Current.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. DWYER: From the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue, not Cape St. Francis.

Kevin is the chairperson of the Discovery Health Care Foundation and was disappointed that COVID had cancelled all of their fundraising efforts for 2020. But this was not going to stop Kevin. He presented his idea to the board on August 27. The idea was for him to walk from his home in Black River - Swift Current, on the Burin Peninsula, to the hospital in Clarendville, a distance of 52 kilometres.

The financial goal was set \$1,000 for each kilometre bringing the goal total to \$52,000. The fundraising campaign was dubbed: Walk 4 Health Care 2020.

The date was special to Kevin; it coincided with the birthday of his late brother Terry.

On September 26, Kevin set off to meet his goals. He was joined by his brother Michael and his nephew Mitchel, the first 23 kilometres; Jim Wall walked 20 kilometres; and his beautiful wife Grace Parsons walked 30 kilometres as well.

I am pleased to say that the goal was surpassed and continues to grow past \$60,000.

I ask this hon. House to join me to show appreciation to Mr. Kevin Parsons, his walking team and the Discovery Health Care Foundation on their successful fundraiser.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

It is my privilege to speak in this hon. House to bring attention to Orange Shirt Day.

Yesterday, we proudly wore orange shirts to humbly pay our respects to the survivors of residential schools and to educate others on the history of residential schools in our province and in Canada.

The origins of this day are attributed to Phyllis Webstad. As a young child in 1973, and attending her first day at residential school, Phyllis' new orange shirt was taken away from her. Orange became a constant reminder of the hurt and loneliness she felt as a residential school student.

The Premier and I shared the honour yesterday to meet virtually with the Grade 7 class in your district, I believe, Mr. Speaker, at Bayview Academy in St. George's to talk about Orange Shirt Day and to learn what this day means to them. I was also honoured last evening to be at The Rooms for the opening of the new collection, Healing and Commemoration, that tells the story of those former students through their own eyes and in their own words. It was a very powerful evening, I might add.

Our government remains committed to delivering apologies to former students of residential schools in this province when it is safe to do so.

By acknowledging the trauma felt by students and their painful memories, we make a commitment not to repeat the mistakes past, but to learn from them. Affirming our commitment that every child matters brings us one step closer to reconciliation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Yesterday, September 30, was Orange Shirt Day and it was a day we honour the many generations of Indigenous children who were sent away to residential schools.

The orange shirt is a symbol reminding everyone of all the wrongs trespassed against Indigenous children and their parents. The orange shirt is worn to remind us that residential schools isolated Indigenous children from their families and forcibly prevented children from speaking their ancestral language, disconnected them from their culture and traditions and forced them to adopt Christianity in order to assimilate them into Canadian society. It's a harsh reality and must not be forgotten.

The orange shirt is a reminder to all of the many generations who, to this day, still suffer the wrongs of intergenerational trauma.

I, myself, grew up with the ghost of residential school trauma in my community and within my own home.

I speak today in this hon. House: the wrongs done to Indigenous people through residential schools were not honourable. An orange shirt worn on September 30 is a reminder to us all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

My wife and daughter home in Labrador wore orange shirts yesterday to honour their ancestors who attended residential schools in Muddy Bay and Cartwright, Labrador. This painful history transcends generations. We feel the pain still today as we educate our youth and others in this province.

I'm pleased The Rooms have taken the important role of being keepers of this Indigenous story so future generations can learn as we continue down the path of truth and reconciliation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to mark today, October 1, as the first official day of the provincial ban on retail plastic bags in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In April 2019, the provincial government amended the *Environmental Protection Act* and began drafting regulations to ban the distribution of retail plastic bags. Today, I am proud to say that those regulations are now in effect, and we are the second province in this country to implement such a ban.

Mr. Speaker, over the last year, residents, businesses, governments and organizations have been actively decreasing the amount of plastic waste created by single-use plastic bags and working to put alternatives in place. It has been encouraging to see many communities, businesses and residents being proactive ahead of the official ban coming into effect today.

This provincial ban builds on the province's ongoing work with the council on the Zero Plastic Waste Strategy as part of the Ocean Plastics Charter.

Our government continues to implement and build on its five-year Climate Change Action

Plan. The Action Plan supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; helps stimulate clean innovation and growth; and build resilience to climate change impacts.

I was happy to be invited to participate in the recent Fridays for Future rally and walk with young people who are speaking out about how climate change will affect their lives.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the environment for future generations is imperative as we all do our part to reduce plastic waste. Banning the distribution and use of retail plastic bags protects the environment and improves the waste management system in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement. We are pleased to see the ban on retail plastic bags finally take effect in our province. This is something that we, the Official Opposition, have advocated and petitioned for, for quite some time.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of this ban was delayed due to COVID-19, but many businesses, municipalities and individuals have already made the move and, hopefully, are getting used to finding alternatives. Mr. Speaker, this is a positive step.

We should also be looking for more ways to reuse our recyclable materials in our own province. We look forward to additional initiatives that reduce waste and encourage putting waste in its place.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for a copy of his statement and congratulate him on banning the distribution of single-use retail plastic bags, a significant contributor to the death of marine life.

It's a small but significant step, similar to Take 3 For The Sea, an idea where a simple action can produce profound consequences. Maybe there is an opportunity for our province to fill the void of plastic retail bags with bags made from paper and help our forestry industry or work with the local innovators to develop something new and cutting edge that can be used the world over.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The budget mentioned jobs eight times; yet, *The Economy* document projects the province to lose 13,000 jobs this year and lose population.

Why wasn't a federal-provincial job strategy part of the budget?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I can share with the Member opposite that we are very focused on jobs. That's why we've put so much emphasis towards job creation in this budget, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've put so much emphasis towards small business. We've allocated over \$25 million, Mr. Speaker, to helping small business through the pandemic.

I will say to the Member opposite, that four years ago in the 2016 budget it forecasted employment this year to be 201,000. In reality,

during the pandemic in the actuals that we've seen now coming out of *The Economy* as part of this budget, we're at 213,400, Mr. Speaker. So better than we thought they were going to be.

I wish the Member opposite was more supportive of continuing to grow jobs in this economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, the minister's figures collide with the reality of the last several years. Our labour market has shrunk dramatically.

The budget talked about the premise of the Atlantic Loop, a strategy unveiled for the first time in the federal Throne Speech.

When did the Premier and the Energy Minister become aware of the Atlantic Loop strategy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure the Member opposite has heard me in this House of Assembly talk about the opportunities in Atlantic Canada. In fact, we've been talking about a version of the Atlantic Loop for the last couple of years. Maybe not using the word, loop, but certainly using that concept, Mr. Speaker, of talking about how Newfoundland and Labrador could supply its neighbours to the west with clean, green electricity. We're going to continue to work that opportunity, because it is indeed an important one for Newfoundland and Labrador and for our Atlantic neighbours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: A very curious answer, Mr. Speaker, because CBC reported a week ago that it appears Newfoundland and Labrador's Premier and Energy Minister have not yet been brought into the loop.

The Premier said: “We ... heard the mention of it ... in the speech from the throne.” And the Energy Minister said: “This is very new.”

If the Premier talks to Ottawa everyday, how could he have been left out of the loop on something his own budget now describes as a major strategy?

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

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

I'm very happy to answer this question on what is certainly an important topic and one that I think is exciting for this province, for Atlantic Canada and for the entire country, really.

What I can say, just so the Member opposite knows completely, as I drove across this province and listened to the Throne Speech, as previously referenced by the Deputy Premier, is that the term Atlantic Loop itself is new, but when we talk about a clean energy road map, that's something this government has been working on for some time now; having energy meetings between the different ministers, having meetings between the premiers on the concept of exporting energy to our neighbours.

The fact is that we are well positioned when it comes to our assets that we have in our province to be able to contribute to this to help our provinces get off things like coal and to move forward. There has been lots of work done by my predecessor, and I look forward to continuing that work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The new Minister of Fisheries recently signed off on a deal that sees Quinlan Brothers being purchased by Royal Greenland.

Minister, what assurance can you give that the competitiveness of our fishing industry, Newfoundland and Labrador quotas, Newfoundland and Labrador processing, Newfoundland and Labrador jobs and the Newfoundland and Labrador economy will be protected?

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

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly welcome the question from the hon. Member opposite because it does reference jobs. The deal involves St. Anthony and other communities in this province, it involves Royal Greenland going into those communities and look forward to going into those communities. So I look forward to what those results are and I believe it will be jobs, jobs, jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, what assurance can you give that Royal Greenland will make decisions in the best interest of the people and the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador when their shareholders are the people of Greenland?

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

MR. LOVELESS: Well, I'd like to remind the hon. Member that Royal Greenland has been in this province since 2016. They've invested over \$21 million and they've employed anywhere from 600 to 690 jobs in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, I say it's about jobs, jobs, jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I'd like to remind the minister: It's about our fishery, it's about our resources and it's about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's more about making sure that people are taken care of. Yes,

we wanted jobs but we want to make sure that our fishery is protected and you haven't done it.

Minister, you approved this deal. The level of foreign investment, does that cause you any concern?

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

MR. LOVELESS: It does cause concern, and it was brought to my attention. When I introduced myself to the Fish Processing Licensing Board, we had a conversation. I don't know if you heard Reg Anstey – who, by the way, is leader of the union. He's been around the fishery for a long, long time.

I know the hon. Member's interest in the security of jobs in these communities is at his heart. I know that, but in terms of this overall deal, Mr. Speaker, the foreign investment piece went through the federal lens of the investment act that said there was no concern with regard to this deal. So I believe this is a good deal moving forward because it does mean security for the communities of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did listen to Mr. Anstey this morning and what I got from Mr. Anstey was that this deal needed to be examined.

What did you do to examine this deal?

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

MR. LOVELESS: With all due respect, the Member opposite knows the mandate of the board, and the Dunne report back in 2004 gave that mandate to the board and that was to take the politics out of it, which is a good thing. It has been taken out.

The board has the mandate; they did the due diligence because it was their responsibility.

They recommended that the sale go through – the transfer, if we wish to use those words, Mr. Speaker – and I signed off on that recommendation because I believe it's a good deal for rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the minister: How can a health care worker get off a plane from a COVID hot spot and go directly into an acute care hospital?

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

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

Labrador-Grenfell in particular, but, in actual fact, a lot of elements of the health care system in this province does have a place for essential workers from outside the facility. Well over two-thirds of these individuals are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but, occasionally, there is a need to bring in skill sets from outside to maintain services, otherwise these services would simply cease.

There are strict requirements for essential workers in health care layered onto those in other occupations and those are expected to be followed. We are investigating the circumstances around this case to see if those were followed. I would be happy to update the House once those investigations are completed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is not about just about Labrador. This is about all of Newfoundland and Labrador, the protection of our people.

What specific provisions are you taking to protect our most vulnerable people and the health care workers who take care of them from exposure to an out-of-province essential worker who may arrive with COVID?

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

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

It's a very good question. The safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is paramount, particularly those of our vulnerable populations. I would refer back to the measures that we've taken over the course of the pandemic and I would also refer back to the number of cases that we have had in those facilities, which is essentially one over a period of six months. That is not a cause for complacency. We have to balance the needs for service delivery with the requirements of bringing in personnel with specific skills to maintain those.

We have protocols in place, both at the essential-worker level, generically, and within regional health authorities. Part of that investigation is to determine whether these were followed and whether these should be beefed up in any way. As I say, I would be happy to report back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Until yesterday, Labrador was COVID free. I was going to ask the minister about assurances he could give to us, the people of Labrador, about preventing the spread of COVID, but, in actual fact, listening to his interview this morning, I have another concern about problems of testing in remote communities and problems in getting those samples back.

How can we assure our people that when they are tested, the test will be analyzed and they will get answers back?

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

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

Unfortunately, Labrador has not been COVID free. I would draw the Member's attention to the fact it was actually the first site in the province to get a case of COVID-19.

With regard to testing, that is a particular concern, and we addressed that through the federal government with co-operation from our Indigenous partners. There are three GeneXpert machines stationed in Labrador and available to be deployed to any site of a hot spot should that be needed. There are sufficient kits to provide those tests, rapid turnaround, and there are sufficient laboratory staff and skilled people to take those samples, Mr. Speaker.

Labrador is very well supplied in that regard.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, we have essential workers coming from Quebec and Ontario who are averaging almost 1,000 new cases per day. They are supposed to self-isolate when not working.

Who is monitoring this as this is happening?

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

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

There is an expectation that the employer (a) will justify the fact that these people are essential – we do not make that decision – and (b) monitor the terms and conditions of the exemption.

I would draw the Member opposite's attention to the fact that Service NL has a role in this and, in

actual fact, under a previous minister, issued five stop-work orders early on in COVID because of breaches.

There is a system in place, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that the essential health care worker with COVID in Labrador did not self-isolate when not working.

What action will be taken against this individual and what actions will you take, as minister, to ensure that it doesn't happen again?

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

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

We are in the process of investigating the circumstances around these comments and allegations and once that is complete, I will have some options. We cannot simply jump to conclusions. However, those conditions and restrictions on essential workers are placed there for a reason, nor can we have them disregarded. If that is the case, there will have to be consequences. The investigation will yield some options for that, if appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's important that we send the proper message to anybody coming in here that safety is paramount. If you're coming in with a responsibility to do something and provide a service, you must do it in a safe manner so the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are protected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Individuals who were on the same plane or in the same hotel with the essential health care worker with COVID are not required to self-isolate, only self-monitor for symptoms. Is this a new policy, and when did it change?

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

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

This is an additional layer that we introduced to acknowledge the fact that there are levels of contact and to reassure people who may have had a passing acquaintance with the plane or the facility or the stores that they have options other than simply self-monitoring. We have layered in the option, if they wish, to take a COVID test.

I would encourage everybody to consider that, if appropriate, but this will help when the COVID Alert app takes on a greater penetration in the province. It lines up very well with other jurisdictional practices across the country.

Put the COVID Alert app on your phone and remember that there are public health measures there for a reason.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Minister, yesterday, you said the news release was issued in the interest of exercising an abundance of caution.

Why then, out of an abundance of caution, aren't you requiring people to self-isolate until their test results are back?

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

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

We are trying not to paralyze the entire province, whilst, at the same time, maintaining the safety of the people concerned.

Prior to COVID Alert and these recent changes, these people would not have been required to self-isolate or get tested. We have now introduced another level of surveillance to help keep the people of this province safe, Mr. Speaker.

Get the COVID Alert app, take advantage of it, and if you are in the category of a casual potential contact, call 811 and get the advice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would expect us to do due diligence and take every precaution possibly that could be taken to ensure that people are safe until the tests themselves come back to be negative.

Rotational workers are required to self-isolate from their families and to be tested when they return home.

Why are these rotational workers held to a different standard than someone who has come into contact with a known COVID case? How is this fair?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Rotational workers are essential in other provinces. They have a great place in this province because they choose to continue to live here and work elsewhere. We have relaxed the circumstances for them on the basis of public health evidence as a pilot scheme. They are tested between day five and day seven and if they're clear, only seven days of isolation is required; recognizing the special circumstances and geography where they work on the sites or their camps because of the way they are cloistered there as well.

We cannot do that for international workers. We cannot do that for occasional workers. This was an attempt to help them deal with what will become a way of life for the next little while.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, that appears to me that there are less restrictions and less responsibilities for out-of-province individuals who come to Newfoundland than there are for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who live here and pay their taxes and provide services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

One hundred thousand Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are without a family doctor. We have seen these disturbing numbers for a while now. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association is describing that the doctor shortage has reached catastrophic shortages.

I ask the minister: How come *Budget 2020* did not have any concrete actions to finally address this problem?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Those are two good points, but one is totally inaccurate. The preamble to that question is utterly inaccurate. People who are rotational workers who live here, who are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, are getting an easement on their requirements because it is safe to do so.

Essential workers, rotational workers from outside have much more stringent requirements and they are held to a standard determined by public health.

It is the Member opposite misleading people by suggesting that we are somehow discriminating against Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: I have to clarify for the minister that most rotational workers were held hostage up until a few weeks ago when not being able to come home and there were a number of them who were not even able to come home to their families. Because of the restrictions on the turnaround, it wasn't viable for them to do it.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that they had to lobby, and I know people on this side of the House lobbied dramatically to ensure that there was some leeway for them to do it, but now there's a double standard. People outside who are essential workers, who have no connection to this province, other than they are brought in here to take money out of the province, get more flexibility than our own Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Mr. Speaker, and that's not acceptable in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to my question again that I had asked: 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are without a family doctor. We have seen these disturbing numbers for a while now. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association is describing that the doctor shortage has reached catastrophic shortages.

I ask the minister: How come *Budget 2020* did not have any concrete actions to finally address this problem?

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

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

Given enough time I will answer the second question, but I will not let the first preamble lie. It is totally inaccurate. Rotational workers are required to self-isolate for no more than seven days if they pass a COVID test. Essential workers and rotational workers or visitors to the province from outside are required to self-isolate for 14 days. I can't see how seven is bigger than 14, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will clarify again for the minister that we will share hundreds, if not thousands, of emails from rotational workers who have outlined the reality they face in not having freedoms to be able to do things while at the same time protecting their families and the people who are surrounded by them.

I do ask the minister: Will you please answer the question related to the number of doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador and the shortage it is with 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians not having access to a physician?

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

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

I had a very good meeting with the new president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association and we've agreed an approach to recruitment and retention of new physicians. We are blessed with more family physicians in this province than we have ever had before. The challenge is in distribution.

We are focusing on access and we are focusing on recruitment and we are focusing on retention. There is a strategy there, and this is part of ongoing discussions, Mr. Speaker. You need to have the plan in place with them, because they are partners, before you can put a price tag to it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I'll just note one of the announcements here: catastrophic shortages. That's coming from the same president that the minister had spoken to. This is coming from the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association. I tend to believe

there is a crisis here and it is catastrophic by not having access to a family physician. I do look forward to the solutions that we didn't see any indication in this past budget.

Budget 2020 announced that the minister will strike a Task Force on Health Care focused on delivering a 10-Year Health Accord. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador need these health care improvements today.

Will they have to wait 10 years for any action?

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

MR. HAGGIE: No, Mr. Speaker, we are taking immediate steps. I would refer the Member opposite to the bits of the budget around Health that he doesn't want to talk about. For example, the universality of the Insulin Pump Program, the expansion of all the drugs that we have here and the issue around –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAGGIE: Yes.

They are productive discussions with the NLMA. The task force is to look at what to do after the short and medium term, Mr. Speaker. It's how we move from a disease-based system to a wellness-based system and address the social determinants of health, Mr. Speaker. That's what it's there for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I entered provincial politics last year in the District of Bonavista and ran on the party platform of \$25-a-day child care. Quite pleased to see it now in this budget and I would say you're very welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PARDY: The question I would ask would be: Can the minister inform –?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PARDY: Can the minister inform that if, indeed, \$25 a day will be the maximum that a parent will have to pay for child care? Which was in our platform.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that Premier Furey ran on a platform of \$25 a day and he became leader and Premier of this province and I commend him for that platform.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: I can say that in his platform of \$25 a day, Mr. Speaker, that it is a maximum of \$25 a day for child care operations that are registered under the Operating Grant Program. Where children currently are up to \$44 a day, it will be a maximum of \$25 a day.

There are people that get child care for free. Those will not be impacted and have to pay \$25, Mr. Speaker. The people that also receive the subsidy will continue to receive that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think the new Premier should have asked first for the \$25-a-day child care.

Will the new child care program be means tested or universal?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no means test. It is open to anybody, Mr. Speaker, who chooses a child care operation that takes advantage of the Operating Grant

Program. About 70 per cent of our regulated child care operations take advantage of the Operating Grant Program. We encourage the other 30 per cent to look at that.

The home based will also be eligible where they hadn't previously. We encourage non-regulated child care operations to look at becoming regulated and taking advantage of the Operating Grant Program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the as-yet-unelected Premier has assigned a former appointee of the Paul Martin administration to lead our economic recovery. He has also appointed a close friend and business partner to negotiate our rate mitigation. This is in spite of our robust and very capable public service and full complement of very competent elected officials.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Deputy Premier: Is the Premier recruiting the – I quote – brightest minds or is he simply appointing Liberal elite to run our province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Well, it's hard to even answer that question, Mr. Speaker, because I think that we are –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. COADY: I'm sorry; I'm getting a lot of heckling here today.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. COADY: I will say this: These are two very honourable, very bright Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have served with distinction in business careers and in the civil service, who have contributed greatly to society and they have volunteered their time to come forward to work with the province and the people of the province to help address concerns that we have. This is with the bright civil

service. This is with the competent leadership that we have in the Liberal Party. I welcome their support. I hope all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians recognize their value.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said "there was misalignment and friction between Nalcor and the province's negotiating team" So he appointed the chair of the board for Nalcor to lead the new rate mitigation team.

Mr. Speaker, given the Public Utilities Board's rate mitigation options includes using Nalcor profits for rate mitigation, I ask the minister of Industry, Energy and Technology: Does he see this as a conflict of interest?

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

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

I'm very happy to answer what is an important question when we talk about the topic of rate mitigation – absolutely.

The fact is that we have seen, through the establishment of the inquiry into Muskrat Falls, that there have been issues in the past with Nalcor. What I will say – and, again, I'm speaking from the perspective of someone who has only been in the position since August 19 – I think everybody is pulling in the same direction right now as we all drive towards what we need – everybody, as a province – is a strategy and a plan to deal with rate mitigation, which is something that is absolutely going to be needed.

We all know the status of Muskrat Falls. Mr. Marshall gave the most recent update very recently. What I will say is that we will take the best and the brightest, we'll take everybody working together to make sure that we address this issue, which will affect, literally, every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: I thank the minister being able to answer that without making reference to conflict of interest.

Mr. Speaker, people are anxious about the ending of the CERB program. A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimates about 34,000 people in this province will be worse off when it ends. Many will have no alternative but to apply for Income Support. If they received the CERB, they will be penalized.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour to commit to following the recommendation of the federal government and not count CERB benefits as income for those individuals who have no choice but to apply for Income Support.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

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

The federal government has acted very proactively and very effectively on a number of measures to provide support to Canadians, including Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, in a very, very difficult period of time.

Yes, the CERB, the income support benefits that were supplied by the federal government, are now transitioning. They have introduced new measures to make Employment Insurance more accessible with a reduced number of hours and with increased benefits.

We're following these measures very, very carefully. We want to work with the federal government in a co-operative way, but, as well, we will act within the province and within our own programming to make sure that those transitions are very effective and keeping in mind a very empathetic view to those who have suffered economic and financial loss.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of St. John's Centre.

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

Mr. Speaker, despite their best efforts, a team of cleaning staff was unable to complete the sanitization of this Chamber, resulting in the cancellation of a Committee meeting.

I ask the Minister of Education, then: Is it fair or is it even safe to expect one school janitor to properly clean a school with several floors and several wings and over 700 students in the run of a day?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I find it rather amusing that the Member would draw a comparison between the tight timelines of moving from a Committee to another in this Legislature and a school.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member knows, we've hired additional custodial staff. We've increased the hours of all custodial staff in our schools. That was based on consultation with the English School District, with others, and from the best of my knowledge, the addition of custodial staff and the additional custodians are doing their job in our schools and keeping our children safe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to table the 2019 Annual Reports and 2020-2022 Activity Plans for the following entities: Fish Processing Licensing

Board, Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board, Appeal Board of Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board and the Chicken Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

I have a document to table.

In accordance with subsection 38(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I am tabling the report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, The Lester Report - September 24, 2020.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009, Bill 46.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that the following changes be made to the composition of the Select Committee on Democratic Reform. That the MHA for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde be replaced by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Several abandoned buildings in unincorporated areas or LSDs pose a significant health and safety hazard to local residents and tourists, including collapsed or collapsing structures or dwelling. Others are dens for rodents. These abandon buildings also undermine the tourism and development potential of many picturesque communities within the District of Bonavista, which is heavily reliant on the industry for its economic growth.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to bring forward legislation that acts on the removal of these collapsed or dilapidated structures.

Quite pleased that we are one of the preferred locations in the District of Bonavista for tourists. I think our numbers reflect that. In communities that would be unincorporated areas, we have some buildings that are causing great concern. For example, a few months back we had a two-storey dwelling on the main road in Knights Cove, which is along 235 that people drive, tourists drive. This building, with all the insulation and contents, is just there within the yard and out close to a community mailbox. We have other buildings in Trinity East, in Newmans Cove that would fit the same criteria.

I know that when we bring in legislation, we always do jurisdictional scans. I would say to you that in Prince Edward Island they have an act which is called the Unsightly –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PARDY: Which is called the *Unsightly Property Act*. It gives the minister responsible the ability to appoint inspectors and issue orders requiring a property to be repaired, updated or even demolished.

I would say to you these buildings have been reported and I think their response has been great, but I'm only left to assume that legislation of our province has handicapped those environmentally conscious and those who are

conscious on growing the economy from being able to take action.

In Ontario, their Building Code Act states that the province is responsible for enforcing the “Act in a territory without municipal organization.”

In New Brunswick, there is an *Unclaimed Property Act* with the distinction between urban and rural unincorporated areas. Again, for action to be taken on these dilapidated and unsafe buildings that occur or structures that occur in our catchment area.

Finally, British Columbia, in their unincorporated communities and within the electoral areas, they have regional district powers that come primarily from the *Local Government Act* and community charter. They can establish bylaws such as those pertaining to unsightly premises.

I would like for the minister to give consideration to bringing this legislation forward because there is much to be gained from it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities, with a response.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Member opposite for bringing forward his comments on that. As he may be aware, we are currently going through a review of our legislation of the *Municipalities Act* and there are some things that we definitely will take into consideration.

Regionalization has also been a key item for this government, and being able to provide regional services and give municipalities a little more authority to do some of this work will definitely enhance the ability of municipalities to put in stronger regulations and also enforcement.

I'd be more than happy to sit down with the Member to further discuss any particulars within his community that he's discussing. Coming from a tourism community myself, I know how valuable tourism is and seeing dilapidated

properties definitely does not leave a lasting impression for our tourists. I welcome a further conversation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Budget Speech.

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to be here again today to represent the people of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port. Firstly, I want to thank the people of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port for giving me the honour and privilege of serving them in the House of Assembly.

Last year, about two weeks after getting elected, I stood here and said my focus would be on the district and working hard for the people that I serve in the district. I said what's good for Stephenville - Port au Port is good for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that continues to be the way it is and the way it should be.

I have to say, I get the greatest satisfaction as a Member of the House of Assembly from actually helping people in my district. That pleasure alone, to be able to do that, to be able to serve and actually see someone benefit from something you've been able to help with is a tremendous satisfaction and I think all of us in the House find that to be the case.

There are lots of challenges and obstacles that people in our province face, including my own District of Stephenville - Port au Port. Today, for example, we heard questions being raised about the shortage of physicians. According to what the NLMA have said, Stephenville in my district is one of those areas that has a catastrophic shortage of physicians. There are hundreds of people in my district without a family physician, and according to Dr. Powell, it's not going to get any better until attention is paid to it. So I would hope that we don't have to wait years for attention to be paid to it. I think it needs to happen now and needs to happen soon.

I'd like to also thank my caucus Members, who I serve with here in the House, for their support and encouragement, and our leader, Ches Crosbie.

Mr. Speaker, COVID, and 2020, obviously, has been quite the year for us and that's why we're here now today talking about a budget and passing a budget.

I do want to take the time to congratulate the Minister of Finance on the tabling of her first budget. Glad to see so much of the PC Blue Book incorporated into the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: I also want to acknowledge all the staff within the Department of Finance, as well as all the other departments across government, and agencies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: We all know the hard work and diligence that it requires to do this. Minister, don't take this the wrong way, but we know without the hard work of all these officials, this budget wouldn't get done.

So on behalf of all of us in the PC Official Opposition, I would like to thank all the officials who worked on getting this budget done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell a little story now, if you'll bear with me. There was a politician who went out to a district and he

met with a couple of local people in the district. The politician said to the gentleman, what can we do for you? And the gentleman said, well, we have two problems, two major issues. What's that, said the politician. Oh, the first one, he said, is we have a real problem with getting a road fixed and we've been waiting for a long time.

Anyway, the politician immediately took his cellphone out of his pocket, dialed a number, proceeded to talk for a few minutes, hung up, put the phone back, and he said, consider it done. What's your next problem? He said, no cell service.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because of the problems sometimes and the bad reputation that politicians often have. We've all heard it that politicians have a reputation of saying one thing and doing something else. As we sit here today, we need to hold ourselves accountable to the people who have elected us. They want to know that what is committed will be delivered. They want to know what is promised will come true and they want their politicians to be honest with them.

Let us not forget that we are all here, Mr. Speaker, to represent our districts and do everything we can to make the lives of the people of our province better.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the budget, in particular. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting *Budget 2020* and there are several reasons for this. The main reason, of course, is the people of the province. The people of the province are more concerned right now about their health, their safety, as well as their economic stability. They don't want an election.

We're already six months into the fiscal year, so why would we vote against expenditures that have already happened? It's like closing a barn door after the horses left. We will be asking questions on where they have spent the money to date, but we will not vote against expenditures that have already happened.

The people of this province want their political leadership managing COVID, not going to the polls. We cannot afford it. We need our government working for the people of the province. People want and need stability. It's not

the time for an election. Our caucus is more concerned about health care, about education, about jobs and about the safety of our people.

An election is the people's chance to cast their verdict. It's their right to have their say within 12 months, just not this fall. Not before the Premier has been grilled on his plans. Not before the 2021 budget when we see what he's planning, then let the people decide their future.

An election is indeed coming within the next 12 months, but people have clearly said they don't want it this fall, as has our party and so has the Premier. Let's first bring the new Premier into the House – if he's elected, or with special permission if he's not – to answer on the public record about his plans; something we have not heard from him. Let him be held to account, then we will go to the polls in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make reference to Interim Supply, because we have had three of them, and I want to assure the people of the province that the province is not going to run out of money. The bills are going to be paid. The employees will be paid. Services will be delivered. Although, I understand there was a little hiccup with payroll for some teachers today and some AES clients, but, hopefully, that will all be straightened out by tomorrow. We will not allow COVID to disrupt government operations, and I think we've proven that. So despite the objections of the government, I think a 60-day Interim Supply is more than enough.

Once again for the record, just for the record, I want to talk about the last four budgets in terms of Interim Supply and the time it took to pass the budgets.

Budget 2016, the budget was presented on April 14, 2016 and it was finished in the House on May 31, 2016. Now, that's 47 calendar days, not 60, but it only took 24 sitting days of this House. *Budget 2017* was presented on April 6, 2017, finished in the House on May 16, 2017. Again, a total of 40 calendar days and only took 15 sitting days of the House. *Budget 2018*, which the minister previously referred to, actually was presented on March 27 and finished in the House on May 22, a total of 56 calendar days and that included a two-week break for Easter, but, again, took only 17 sitting days. *Budget*

2019, which was originally presented on April 16 but then an election was called, it was re-tabled on June 11, passed on June 26, with only 15 calendar days and nine sitting days. Again, we don't need to worry that the 60 days will run out.

Again, as I said, this has been an unusual year. By the time this budget is passed, the province will have run for seven or eight months on Interim Supply. This is not a fiscal and economic plan for the 2021 fiscal year; it's a plan for what's left of the current fiscal year, which will approximately be about one-third of the fiscal year's budget. This budget is basically a bridge to get us to the 2021 budget next spring. People will expect that budget to present a comprehensive plan of action for the province, the government and the economy.

Despite our intention to let this budget pass, we are not confident at all in this government's ability to drive economic growth and jobs. Let's consider all the money, the billions this government has already spent this year over the past six or seven months. Let's consider what they've spent in the last five years. That money should have been generating growth while sustaining services our people need. There's plenty of money to get the job done and get our economy growing in the process, and that, despite the wealth of opportunities and resources that could have been driving growth here just as other provinces were growing, but that's not what happened. The Liberals have not delivered.

The new Premier inherits the failed legacy of his predecessor over the past five years. That legacy, which is on the shoulders, not just of the former premier, but of the entire Cabinet and caucus opposite, is a legacy of failure to lead our economy to growth. It's a legacy of decline, missed opportunities, diminishing jobs and, not surprisingly, a declining population. People cannot stay if they cannot work. They cannot work if there are no jobs. And there are fewer jobs because the government that was elected five years ago to nurture a climate of job growth has dismally failed.

This is not just about the past. The new Premier inherits this legacy, not with a plan to do things differently but with a pocketful of little more than feel-good rhetoric. Frankly, that's not going

to get this province out of the fiscal and economic mess it's in. Feel-good mantras like *The Way Forward* never led us to growth since 2015 and they aren't going to be enough to produce growth in the months to come, but that's all this new Premier brings to the table. He's a fresh coat of paint on a vehicle that does not drive and does not deliver.

People expected very much from someone who said he was coming to the table with a determination to lead, with fresh ideas, with an economic plan, with a vision for growth, but people are sorely disappointed. One misstep after another is leaving people feeling wary about what's to come.

Instead of hitting the ground running on day one with a plan of action, the new Premier is tripping over his feet. There is no plan of action and no vision for the future. There are only buzzwords like hope. As the Health Minister has aptly put it, Hope is a girl's name, not a policy. That's all the new guy is offering, words of hope, calls to trust me, please, to be patient. We've heard it all before.

Newfoundland and Labrador does not have the luxury of being patient. Every lost year, every lost month represents another slide down the spiral of decline. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not willing to give a blank cheque of trust to any Liberal after what they've seen this province suffer these past five years.

If the new Premier had a viable plan to back up his decision to run for office, people might be more forgiving. Not only does he lack such a plan, but the absence of such a plan means the province is essentially in the hands of the exact same people who have spent the past five years failing. It's the same caucus, essentially, the same Cabinet that has overseen the colossal decline in our province's fortunes and standing.

In his first few weeks of office, the new Premier has shocked the province by giving a plum appointment to someone who the Muskrat Falls inquiry found guilty of withholding key information about the project from those who needed that information to make clear, informed decisions. Why? Why reward someone and give a position of trust to someone who has betrayed the public trust?

The new Premier did not have to do this. He could've cited the inquiry report as evidence that it was time to do things differently, to appoint someone who earned the public trust by functioning responsibly when he held the public trust. The new Premier could've upheld that standard but he failed, and people are wondering why.

The new Premier's colleagues who wear the failures of the past five years are offering nothing but what we've seen already throughout the past five years. We heard it just days ago in Question Period when we asked what the government is planning to do to get us out of this mess. What we did hear was more excuses, ministers wringing their hands. The spectacle of the Natural Resources Minister asking the Opposition for just one concrete idea that they could run with because they have none of their own.

Your government was elected to lead. You cannot lead. If you have no concrete ideas of your own and if you're not willing to listen to the concrete suggestions of the Opposition and the business community that spoke through Paul Mills and the McKinsey advisors who gave plenty of concrete ideas that we were advocating for years, then how can you call yourself the government our province needs? Then comes the blame.

The new Premier said there would be no blaming on his watch but he failed to tell his other colleagues, so here we go again. Ministers blaming their own failure to act on factors beyond their control. As they watch one problem give birth to several more, they start searching for someone to blame. Pointing fingers becomes the most popular form of exercise. Mr. Speaker, we need fixers rather than blamers.

Mr. Speaker, you can put your boots in the oven but that don't make them biscuits. I think it's time, Mr. Speaker, blaming others when they are the ones who've been in the office for the past half decade, making excuses for the inaction of their federal Liberal cousins, pretending everything is better than it is.

Let's talk about COVID. We acknowledge that COVID has turned the world upside down this year, but our fiscal and economic crisis predates

COVID. COVID simply made clear just how vulnerable we are, after five years of Liberal failure to grow.

Other provinces went into the pandemic period in strong fiscal shape, not ours. Other provinces had thriving economies leading into the pandemic period, not ours. We are not dismissing the impact of the pandemic, far from it. We want to applaud all those who are helping us weather this unprecedented crisis.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, being a front-line health care worker having to deal with the pandemic while hearing stories from other parts of the world about front-line workers succumbing to the illnesses that they were working hard to treat. Imagine those front-line health care workers having to decide whether it was safe for them to return to their families at the end of their shift.

Imagine the front-line cleaners who have been disinfecting our workplaces and places of business. Imagine the front-line retail workers, including some who are now walking the picket lines because their bosses decided the pandemic is essentially over and their extra benefits are no longer warranted. Imagine the workers at our airports and ferry terminals where every new arrival is potentially carrying the virus that has sickened and killed so many.

These are people whose courage has enabled our province to weather the storm. They are doing their jobs. The chief medical officer of Health and her staff are doing their jobs.

To all of those involved in keeping us safe, I say thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the provincial government hired Paul Mills to provide advice on handling COVID-19 and kick-starting our economy. The advice on COVID-19 is good, including many of the things the Official Opposition and the all-party pandemic committee recommended; however, the advice on kick-starting our economy is quite a shock. It recommends so many of the things that the Liberal government should have done but failed to do over the past five years. If the Liberals had

been driving the economy with sensible policies for the past five years, this advice would not have been needed.

The Mills's report is another indictment of the Liberal government's failure to put sound economic growth policies in place over the past five years. The million-dollar McKinsey report made similar recommendations a year ago in another indictment of the Liberal failure to take the lead in driving our economy to produce the jobs our people need. Mills said the oil and gas industry is facing significant challenges and support is required from the federal government; yet, the Liberals have made apologies for federal inaction and failed to deliver the support this core growth industry needs to generate billions in investment and thousands of jobs.

Instead of telling Ottawa they're such good friends, this government needs to wake up to Ottawa and to what's going on down here, and Ottawa needs to wake up. That, Mr. Speaker, is why things are as bad as they are, and Ottawa's inaction is making it worse by ignoring us.

Mills said, "The adequacy of Newfoundland and Labrador's broadband and cellular network was the most often cited issue for firms, organizations and individuals," yet the Liberals failed to take the lead to provide this key infrastructure at the expense of growth and jobs. Quote from Mills: "High speed connectivity for all citizens is essential for many reasons such as business activity, ensuring safety, delivering health services, participating in online learning and training, etc; ...

"Although there has been ongoing funding for broadband infrastructure, in order to fully realize opportunities and in some cases, necessities, it is clear that investment in broadband and digital infrastructure is one of the most critical issues the province should address while recognizing it is not a quick fix and requires significant investment. The message was clear though that opportunities for economic growth and development require the basic foundation of connectivity requirements for all citizens. There was a clear theme that digital infrastructure is vital, will modernize the economy and fix some historical problems."

Mills said, “Air access is considered to be a long-standing issue that constrains economic development across sectors,” yet the Liberals failed to produce an air access strategy and watched while key routes left our province for Halifax. Again, quoting from Mills: “Air access is already a significant challenge for Newfoundland and Labrador and serious concern was expressed about how that will look in the months and years ahead with the impacts being experienced in the aviation industry due to the pandemic....”

“Air access is considered to be a long-standing issue that constrains economic development across sectors. COVID-19 has depressed demand and airlines such as Air Canada and other carriers have dropped many routes. This will be a particular challenge for rural Newfoundland and Labrador.”

Mills went on to say that a competitive regulatory regime was raised in almost every interview because of the complexity/uncertainty and bureaucratic burden, yet the Liberal government failed to drive regulatory red-tape reform.

Again, a full quote from Mills: “Competitive regulatory regime. A review of this issue was not part of the mandate for the present exercise. It was, however, raised in almost every interview. It is not expressed as a cost issue primarily, but instead as a complexity/uncertainty and bureaucratic overburden”

Mills went on to say that: “Some of the existing tax credits are too complicated and processes needed to be simplified.” The Liberals plummeted our economy with higher taxes and tax policies that strangled growth. The Liberals imposed more than 300 tax and fee increases in the 2016 budget and only later did they commission a tax policy analysis of the potential impacts of the tax policy changes. It was that independent analysis that echoed our own criticism that the levy was regressive, actually doing more harm than good. Even then, they failed to take the advice of their own independent tax policy advisors and eliminate the levy. Well, I’m glad to say now that finally in 2019, when you fill your income tax this year, you won’t have to pay a levy.

What about the other regressive tax measures? This is a government that, by acting without a plan, or prior consultation, actually worsened the dire situation. Mr. Speaker, they made things worse than they were and worse than they needed to be and now Mills is echoing those findings.

These are all policies that the government controls, no one else, and yet the government has failed to bring about progressive tax policies that would lead to growth rather than decline. Mills confirms it. Mills was reporting what business leaders throughout the province were saying. They’re not happy and why would they be happy when their own government is making their challenges worse, actually impeding the growth and investment and jobs that our economy sorely needed. Is it any wonder our province has been performing so badly and so many jobs have been lost?

Again, quoting directly from Mills: “There were many references that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should consider using procurement and tax incentives to stimulate business activity. For example, there was a clear position that tax incentives to buy Newfoundland and Labrador or Canadian technology and technical services is a way to stimulate activity. There was a common theme expressed that government needs to be a leader in purchasing local product, with all trade agreements in mind.”

Mills said many small and medium businesses were too indebted to deal with the COVID-19 downturn; yet, the Liberals have throttled these very businesses with taxes that raised indebtedness and cost jobs. Think about that. These employers and economic drivers in our communities were at the brink of collapse before COVID even hit. COVID pushed them over the edge. What if this government had heard their pleas five years ago or four, or three or two? You want to blame COVID, but COVID only made the inevitable happen sooner. The list goes on.

Let’s just highlight a couple more. Mills said we are vulnerable on food security, yet the Liberals have set the bar low. People on the North Coast of Labrador know better than anyone what it’s like to be vulnerable because of food security

issues. Where was the leadership from this government? Where is that leadership now?

Canada was growing by leaps and bounds before COVID, but not Newfoundland and Labrador. Our period of growth ended long ago. We're spending five years in terrible decline. Where was the leadership? Where was the strategy to bring Ottawa to the table to create a growth strategy targeted to this province to correct the widening disparity that has pushed our province farther down while Canada was growing? This is the government that should've been making that case and invoking our constitutional right for targeted measures to lift us up and let us share in national growth, but the party opposite failed. We spell this out in great details in our 2019 Blue Book. Still, the party opposite failed to listen and failed to act, and when COVID hit, other provinces were better able to absorb the blow while this province suffered.

We may not have endured huge numbers of COVID cases, but the economic impact here has been devastating, and COVID was not the only cause. It was only the stiff wind that pushed our struggling companies and families over the edge. I can't emphasize this strongly enough. The government opposite is pretending everything was fine until COVID hit, but COVID-19 didn't cause all these troubles, it only brought them into clear focus. The Liberal government cannot make excuses. They cannot blame COVID. They have failed to lead on the economic and governance fronts for five years and they still have no plan. All they have is another plan to bring another team together to give them advice on what they should be doing.

They've had McKinsey to give them this advice. They've had Mills to give them this advice. They've had the Official Opposition and the business community and many others shouting this advice from the rooftops for years but still they are bankrupt of ideas and searching for answers that they've been ignoring all along. Again, what do these people do around the Cabinet table except throw up their hands? We have already given them many policies that they could have been implementing.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2015, the government tried to close libraries throughout the province but because of the outcry of the people of the

province they wound up having to reverse that decision. Now it appears they're building their own library of reports that they haven't acted upon: the McKinsey report, the Mills's report, the report on waste management, and the report on road and air ambulance services. All these reports, and where are the recommendations? Have they been implemented or are we still waiting? Now it appears we have to wait even longer.

The Mills and the McKinsey reports prove we were right to be advocating for these policies all along. Those business and community leaders throughout the province who were consulted by Mills said precisely the same thing. The level of frustration is palpable, and why wouldn't people be frustrated? With every passing day, week, month, year, time and opportunities are lost and jobs and businesses are disappearing. What this province has needed for the past five years is a solid plan to create jobs, jobs, jobs.

The McKinsey and Mills's reports clearly highlight exactly why we have been losing jobs, jobs, jobs. Even after five years and even with a new Premier at the helm, there is still no plan, just more evidence of the pain this province is suffering from the lack of planning and leadership. Newfoundland and Labrador deserves better. Newfoundland and Labrador demands better. They are not buying the rhetoric and the spin; they've heard it all before.

From *The Way Forward* to all of the latest rhetoric about optimism and hope and a new day for Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, it's just hot air. People want to know when the government will start doing something instead of simply telling people it's going to be okay if they'll only be a little more patient. Patience, Mr. Speaker, is a luxury people no longer have.

Quite some time ago, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance was warning that the province was set to lose 11,400 jobs. This is hardly a province that can absorb job losses of that magnitude. We were already seeing sustained out-migration because of job shortages. Now we find that the most important number in this budget is the number of jobs that will be lost this year, which has been put in their Estimates as over 13,000 jobs and no evidence

of a plan for how those jobs will be recreated. Thirteen thousand jobs lost is huge.

Mr. Speaker, that's only a number, but for those people that have been laid off or lost their job, it's more than a number; it's a reality. For the people who are worried about losing their jobs, it's a reality; it's not a number. For all of the other people out there that, from day to day, are wondering if they go to work today will they be able to go back tomorrow, that's a reality; that's not a number. That's what we need to focus on is jobs, jobs, jobs.

The Ball administration came into office in 2015 promising a plan that people would like. We were told the captains of industry had designed it, but, again, that plan never materialized. Then, we were offered *The Way Forward*. For all the rhetoric, it did not lead the province to growth. It was a feel-good document, designed to camouflage the downward spiral of decline. It would have been more honestly labelled the way downward.

It was very late in the Ball mandate that the Liberals finally threw up their hands, admitted they had no plan and spent a million dollars – a million dollars – to hire McKinsey & Company to produce the economic plan, again, that they themselves have failed to deliver. McKinsey produced a document full of ideas. Ironically, the opportunities that McKinsey said offered the most promise were the very ones that the Liberal government have spent their entire mandate undermining: oil industry opportunities squandered; aquaculture opportunities ruined by a Liberal failure to shore up the industry's reputation; ocean technology opportunities squandered when the Liberals let our lead in that area slip away to Halifax; aviation opportunities squandered when the Liberals failed to lead an air access strategy and watched our key air routes disappear while Halifax benefited from our government being asleep at the wheel.

The McKinsey report turned out to be an indictment of the Liberal record. More than any other document, it highlights the golden opportunities that the Liberals have let slip through their fingers, opportunities that could have been bringing long-term, stable, sustainable, well-paying jobs to our province, but opportunities that have never been seized.

The new Premier is not even pretending to sell *The Way Forward* as an economic plan. That, in itself, should be a sign that not even the Liberals believe in it.

Now, they have finally tabled the Mills's report, which tells us that the McKinsey report was right and the Official Opposition was right and the policies of this Liberal government for the past five years have actually been doing more harm than good. So where does that leave us at the end of 2020? It's back to square one.

The new Premier is now seeking to hire yet another group of captains of industry to develop yet another economic plan, some time down the road. Who knows how long it's going to take to deliver such a plan. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking away, more months get ripped off the calendar, more jobs disappear and more families pack up if they're lucky to find work elsewhere, or else their homes and property get repossessed because there is no employment to pay the bills. More bankruptcies, more shattered dreams, more ruined lives, more communities with businesses boarded up like we see even on the main street of our capital city.

I recently spent time in Rocky Harbour, on the Northern Peninsula, where businesses did not even open for this tourist season. It wasn't viable for them to open their doors. They did not have the supports that they thought they would get. Hopefully, the new announcement in the budget will do something for them, but here they are paying taxes, business tax on a business that generated no revenue. They need help; businesses in our region need lots of help. All the while McKinsey says there were opportunities galore that the government could have been seizing or helping our private sector seize.

We could have been thriving on the strength of the resources and the opportunity we have in spades. Instead, we've missed the boat and are struggling to keep our heads above water. Unfortunately, many have already gone under. What a colossal waste of opportunity this Liberal administration has overseen.

When historians assess the past five years, they will ask themselves why a province so rich in opportunity was instead drowning in decline.

The ones they will fault are the ones at the helm, that's the key. Why sit there? Why even seek the lead in the government if you have no idea what to do?

Madam Speaker, one of the biggest failures of this Liberal government is their insistence on putting party loyalty ahead of our province's best interest. If a federal government is failing this province, we have an obligation to our people to take them on. No matter what their political stripe, the province has to come first.

The Trudeau Liberals are taking this province for granted. Six safe Liberal seats in a province with just seven seats to offer and a provincial administration that was so compliant that it failed to raise a whimper no matter how badly we were being treated, no matter how much we were being taken for granted, no matter how bad things got here, while Canada grew by leaps and bounds.

This cozy relationship may have been defensible had it delivered for our people and our province but it failed to deliver. The disparity has only gotten worse and our standing on the national stage weaken as our voice became silent.

Alberta and Saskatchewan, our natural allies in this fight, were left to wage the fight on their own, and they did. They made western alienation a national theme and a priority for federal action. But we here in this province, through partisan silence that is now continuing under the new Premier's cozy relationship with his federal peers, we are left behind. Who will speak for us if our own government won't? Who will make the case in the national arena if our own provincial government is standing behind the federal government cheerleading their every move? No wonder we are not getting attention or action. No one even knows we are suffering.

McKinsey gave clear advice to this government that we need more from Ottawa than we're getting. McKinsey pointed out that our future success depends on federal-provincial co-operation. In 2019, we were saying the same thing. No one opposite was listening. Maybe they should start listening now. Maybe somebody should pull out the sections of our 2019 Blue Book where we demanded an urgent

federal-provincial initiative to get our economy and population growing.

The Constitution of Canada obligates Ottawa to participate in targeted economic development initiatives to help lift any province at the losing end of a widening economic disparity gap. It's right there in the federation's basic law. Let me read into the record section 36 of the Constitution of Canada. Let's see what it guarantees a desperate province like Newfoundland and Labrador.

"Commitment to promote equal opportunities 36.(1) Without altering the legislative authority of Parliament or of the provincial legislatures, or the rights of any of them with respect to the exercise of their legislative authority, Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to (a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians;" – all Canadians, including Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – "(b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities;" – including Newfoundland and Labrador – "and (c) providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians" – including Newfoundland and Labrador.

Look very closely at the line that says: "furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities." The disparity gap between our province and other provinces was glaring before COVID and widening. We had the right to call for a special federal-provincial growth plan to address that, but no such plan was advocated by this government and no such plan was delivered. The disparity only widened: higher unemployment, higher out-migration, less investment, less growth.

Why did the new era of cozy federal-provincial Liberal relations not lead to an initiative to reduce that disparity? What a wasted opportunity. Five long years with only a widening gap to show for it. As the gap grows wider, this federal inaction grows all the more shameful. Are we really members of a federation that treat provinces as equals or are we a limb to be amputated or strangled by a tightening tourniquet of inaction?

Think back to 2015. When the Ball and Trudeau administrations came to office in 2015, it was heralded as a brand new era of federal-provincial co-operation to lift our province to new heights of growth. Instead, we've been taken for granted. Instead of standing up and fighting for justice, the provincial Liberals have cozied up on the couch with their new cousins, refusing to make waves while our province's fortunes have been swirling down the drain.

Now we have a new Premier singing the praises of the very federal Cabinet minister who has let us down all these years. Why does a personal friendship trump Ottawa's responsibility to treat this province fairly under the Constitution? At what point do the Liberals say enough is enough? How bad does it have to get before our provincial Liberals put province before party and start voicing our concerns loudly enough that they can be heard? The country's West has finally started screaming for justice and Ottawa is listening. The country's easternmost province continues making excuses for federal cousins who just don't care what's happening here.

When our federal Cabinet representative, a close personal friend and life-long confidant of the prime minister, is not able or willing to deliver, why is our Premier applauding him as if he is the great deliverer coming to our rescue? When will this government start holding the Trudeau Liberals and Minister O'Regan's feet to the fire and stop playing so nice when we're being treated so dismally?

The Natural Resources Minister asked for one good idea. The easiest, simplest way to deliver this past summer would have been through offshore oil exploration incentives to give our industry an edge in competing for scarce, global exploration dollars.

Norway, a progressive, environmentally-friendly jurisdiction decided to do what the Trudeau Liberals would not. Their plan has succeeded. Their industry is buoyant despite the tough times for world oil. Meanwhile, over here, the federal government wasted the entire summer exploration season doing nothing but ignoring Noia, ignoring Trades NL, ignoring the people and political leaders demanding action.

What have we heard from our own Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals both provincial and federally? One day we hear phrases like: be patient, something is coming down the pipe; it won't be long now. The next day we hear phrases like: it's a global problem, it's beyond anyone's control; we just have to accept that this is the new reality.

Excuses, excuses, excuses. Meanwhile, thousands of people are worrying themselves sick as they see jobs and job prospects evaporate before their eyes. They are crying out for action; crying out for a government to listen, hoping someone will care. Rallying at government offices, telling their sad stories on the news.

The new Premier presents himself as being full of compassion and empathy for the plight of people in this province but when it comes to action, when it comes to actually lighting a fire under federal politicians and bringing home results, the new Premier is delivering the same plate load of nothing that his predecessor delivered. Compassion without action is not compassion at all. People expect more than crocodile tears from those they elected to put our province's best interests first and fight and deliver.

There is nothing to celebrate in our relationship with the Trudeau Liberal government. It has done our province more harm than good by essentially ignoring our plight and suppressing our greatest opportunities for growth and sustainable self-reliance. Do not hand a medal of honour to those who ignore us and harm us. Save those medals of honour for those who actually do some good.

The budget touts the \$320 million the federal government has given to our oil industry; \$320 million taken from the dividends that Ottawa is receiving from their share in Hibernia. How ironic is that? A share the province has for years been asking Ottawa to transfer to our province now that their initial investment in Hibernia has been paid off and then some. They are giving us our own money. Thank you very much, Ottawa, for your generosity. That amount of money is far less than the industry says we need to keep our oil sector afloat and thriving and hiring in extraordinary tough times.

Let's hear what Noia had to say in response, and I quote from *The Telegram*: "Noia CEO Charlene Johnson told reporters the money is welcome, but it's not enough to solve the industry's problem. Even with the province's fiscal situation, and O'Regan's statement that the federal Liberals will not directly subsidize oil and gas companies, and the length of time it took to see Friday's announcement, Johnson says Noia will continue asking for more money." In other words, something is better than nothing, but this is only a fraction of what is needed.

Let's hear what Husky had to say, again, from *The Telegram* reporting: "Husky's West White Rose project has been put on hold due to financial difficulties for the company sparked by the oil price downturn and the COVID-19 pandemic. The company says it's still open to discussing options with the province and federal government to find a way to continue work.

"The funding announced today will not assist in moving West White Rose forward for the 2021 construction season,' reads a statement from the company.

"However, we welcome further engagement with both levels of government, at the earliest opportunity, to find a creative pathway to restarting a project that is an opportunity to develop a net zero emissions facility and employ Newfoundland and Labrador workers."

Let's hear what the Premier had to say, again, quoted from *The Telegram*: "Furey says the initial request from Husky – of an equity stake similar to what was seen given by the federal government to the Hibernia project – just isn't possible for the province.

"I've been honest with Husky: we don't have the amount of money they need in Newfoundland and Labrador to support that project,'

"If there's a way, using creatively that \$320 million, to help them, I'm all for it."

In other words, the kind of help the federal Progressive Conservatives gave to kick-start the Hibernia project in the 1990s is not going to be coming from the federal Liberals this time

around. It just isn't possible, says the Premier. He doesn't say, quote: He will leave no stone unturned in pressing Ottawa to do for the West White Rose what the federal PCs did for Hibernia. Instead, he says Seamus O'Regan is a great friend of the province and of the government and of him, personally, despite his unwillingness and inability to deliver for Newfoundland and Labrador in our time of need.

When the federal PCs took an equity position in Hibernia, the Mainland media went ballistic. What a stupid idea, they said. How wrong they were. Here's what former Liberal Mines and Energy minister Dr. Rex Gibbons said about John Crosbie's role in securing that Hibernia investment: "Without him, we would not have an oil industry. That's my view." Here's what long-time senior bureaucrat Peter Kennedy said: "They would not have been secured without a very skilled political leader at the helm, and that in fact was Mr. Crosbie." Here's what business leader Fraser Edison said: "If you didn't have somebody like John Crosbie, we would have had a big challenge to get that project off the road."

There was harsh criticism from all over the country: an equity stake, a subsidy, how shocking. But John Crosbie persevered, and we would not have an oil industry today without him. If only our current federal Cabinet minister was cut from the same cloth as John Crosbie. If only our current Premier was cut from the same cloth as Brian Peckford and, yes, even Clyde Wells. These were fighters, striving to get our offshore sector off the ground. Now that circumstances are threatening the investment and jobs and enormous revenues this industry is capable of sustaining, where are the leaders like those of the past?

Instead of John Crosbie fighting tooth and nail for Newfoundland and Labrador, we have Seamus O'Regan telling us: tax incentives and investment rebates are off the table. They're a subsidy and we ran on a mandate of no subsidies. He is not the minister of should and can and will. He's the minister of shouldn't and can't and won't. He's not fighting for us; he's fighting against us.

What about this new Premier? Is he a Brian Peckford or a Clyde Wells fighting to give the

oil sector a life? No. He's telling us it just isn't possible. He's telling us that his good friend Seamus O'Regan is doing enough by doing next to nothing. Doing enough by giving us our own money and telling us the things the industry really needs are – quote – off the table.

Between O'Regan's – quote – off the table and Furey's – quote – it just isn't possible, where are the fighters that Newfoundland and Labrador needs to keep our oil industry and it's billions in investment and it's thousands of jobs alive and thriving? Where are those fighters? They are not on the other side of the House. They are on this side of the House. We are the party fighting for the people saying what needs to be on the table, saying what must be possible and must be delivered. We are the people's party fighting for jobs and prosperity while those opposite wash their hands of responsibility and give up the fight. If we had those people at the table here and in Ottawa in the 1990s, we would never have had a Hibernia, never have a Terra Nova, never have had a White Rose and never have had an oil industry at all.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are, frankly, sick of being told we have to keep quiet and put up with whatever kind of rollover and play-dead politics. They see the opportunities here in Newfoundland and Labrador. They believe this province is worth fighting for, and quite honestly so do we.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: It was absolutely shocking that Noia had been pushed aside for the past six months, the entire summer exploration season, when their suggestions for government intervention were so clear and sensible and reasonable and worthy of immediate action. Liberals here and federally have ignored Noia, treated them like some sort of lobby group, when they are, in fact, the voice of an entire industry that is capable of sustaining this province and the thousands of jobs and securing our finances and driving our economy for decades to come. They have been treated with disdain by political leaders, all of them Liberals, for the last year.

Madam Speaker, I would like to put on record what Noia had to say from the outset when

requesting federal and provincial help back in June 23, 2020: “Canadians have sent more than 2,000 letters of support asking the federal government to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil and natural gas industry. The letters from supporters of the offshore were directed to Members of Parliament as well as Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Finance” – at the time – “Bill Morneau, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Jonathan Wilkinson and Minister of Infrastructure and Communities Catherine McKenna. Supporters are calling on government to implement changes to the tax regime to support offshore oil development and exploration so that the industry can be globally competitive and people can get back to work.

“The letters are from individuals who know how important the offshore oil and natural gas industry is to the economic success of the region. More than 6,500 people directly rely on the offshore to support their families and pay their bills. That number is thousands more when you include those employed by more than 500 supply and service companies which provide goods and services to the sector. Without an immediate federal investment to support the offshore oil and natural gas industry, all of this is at risk.

“The industry is up against tremendous challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting drop in demand for oil and natural gas. This is occurring at a time when the offshore has a critical role to play in the global and domestic market. As markets begin to recover and life returns to normal the world will require more energy and demand will rebound. Global demand for oil and natural gas is expected to grow for decades and as other offshore jurisdictions, including Norway, move to change their tax regimes to attract investment, Newfoundland and Labrador must keep pace or investment will flow to other jurisdictions.

“Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore industry, with its continued commitment to safety and environmental performance, can supply responsibly produced energy to the world while continuing to bring significant benefits to Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador's light sweet crude oil is considerably below the global oil

production average for GHG emissions at extraction.

“Support for exploration and new developments will help Atlantic Canada continue to grow as a leader in ocean innovation and lead to the development and adoption of new technologies that will benefit all ocean industries. The federal government’s actions now can help ensure the offshore industry is in a strong position to compete for investment dollars, enable new projects and jobs in the region, help to restart deferred projects, and continue to contribute to global emissions reduction efforts.”

That was from Noia. Another quote directly from Charlene Johnson, the Noia CEO: “The Newfoundland and Labrador offshore oil and gas industry is facing an unprecedented crisis and its future is in jeopardy. I cannot emphasize just how dire the situation has become and I fear for its future without immediate action from the Government of Canada. With more than 2,000 letters written by concerned citizens, our collective voice is calling upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government to support our people, industry and province, by providing incentives for both offshore exploration and development projects to make the industry globally competitive and help thousands of people get back to work.”

She continued to go on. I want to read another quote from another gentleman in the industry. This is from a gentleman you all would know, Paul Barnes, the director of the Atlantic Canada and Arctic, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Mr. Barnes said this: “The offshore industry touches every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, either directly through employment or business revenue or indirectly through government revenue which helps pay for hospitals, roads and schools. We urge government to listen to the Canadians who took the time to submit letters, by investing in this industry and helping secure a prosperous future for the province and country.”

Again, for months Noia, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and many others had been asking the Government of Canada to provide assistance to the offshore oil

and gas industry. There were numerous meetings, discussions, exchanges of information, and while Noia believed the industry clearly had the support of Minister O’Regan and the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Members of Parliament, the federal government at the end of the day has not provided any consequential assistance to the industry. Giving us back our own money is not the support that this province needs.

Karen Winsor, Noia board Chair and COO: “Minister O’Regan has advocated for and spoken favorably of our industry, its role in the global energy market, and how oil produced offshore Newfoundland and Labrador can help provide a lower carbon product to that market. We ask Minister O’Regan’s cabinet colleagues to support him and our offshore and help the thousands of people who have been impacted by this crisis. We need immediate action to get people back to work, to remain globally competitive, and to retain the investment we have previously attracted to our industry. We need a show of faith in our future and we need it immediately.”

“In numerous interviews and forums held in recent weeks, Minister O’Regan has championed the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore oil and gas industry, the people who work in it, and the product it produces. The commitment of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to achieve net zero by 2050 and the willingness of the offshore oil and gas industry to help achieve that goal have also been lauded by the minister. Noia believes the Government of Canada needs to foster these attributes and support our offshore ...” oil.

Many community and business leaders have called for federal investment in the offshore. “Over the next 10 years, the estimated loss to the province due to deferment and loss of oil and gas exploration and development projects could be substantial.” We stand to lose: “\$11 billion in provincial revenues impacting programs, infrastructure, education and health care throughout communities in Newfoundland and Labrador; \$59 billion of total provincial GDP; 90,000 person-years of employment, resulting in significantly lower consumer spending in retail, restaurants, real estate, and other services; and The province’s best opportunity to be an

international clean growth leader and oceans technology hub.

“The world is moving towards a low carbon economy. Newfoundland and Labrador’s offshore oil and gas industry represents one of the lowest carbon per barrel footprints in the world. Greenhouse gas emissions can be further reduced by making immediate investments in the development of lower carbon fossil fuels. Reducing global emissions by providing the world with Newfoundland and Labrador oil to help supply increasing global ... demand is a valuable contribution to the fight against climate change.

“Newfoundland and Labrador’s offshore oil and gas industry fully supports protecting the environment, reducing carbon emissions and working with governments to meet provincial, national, and international emissions reduction targets. Through its commitment to lower carbon and clean technology, the offshore oil and gas industry will be a catalyst for clean growth innovation. The technologies developed will also accelerate the diversification of the province’s economy. The Newfoundland and Labrador approach mirrors that of Norway, a global environmental leader, which has steadily increased oil and gas production since 2012 due to its government’s policy of stimulating exploration and development while simultaneously taking significant actions to move to a low carbon economy and developing new clean technologies that are being exported worldwide. Newfoundland and Labrador can lead Canada’s energy future and make Canada a global clean growth leader like Norway.

“The importance of the oil industry to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador cannot be overstated with an estimated 30 per cent of GDP, 13 per cent of labour compensation and 10 per cent of employment (over the 2010 to 2017 period). As of March 31, 2020 there were 6,390 people directly employed on NL offshore oil and gas development projects while thousands more were employed in supporting industries.

“All Canadians are encouraged to join with the over 80 leaders who are today calling for support for the offshore.” That came from wearenloffshore.ca.

Many community and business leaders have spoken up about the importance of our offshore oil and gas. “The importance of the offshore industry to Newfoundland and Labrador cannot be overstated. It represents one of the lowest carbon per barrel footprints in the world, contributes an estimated 30 per cent of GDP, and directly employs 6,390 people with thousands more in supporting industries.” Hon. Siobhan Coady, Minister of Natural Resources, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. TRIMPER: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): Order, please!

The Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Just a reminder that we’re not able address each other by their personal names.

MR. WAKEHAM: It was a quote from the (inaudible).

MR. TRIMPER: Regardless, you’re not able to do that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I ask the hon. Member to retract.

MR. TRIMPER: It’s the second time in the speech. Thank you.

MR. WAKEHAM: I won’t name anybody else.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. WAKEHAM: Here’s another quote: ““\$4 billion of exploration investment activity, in addition to billions of associated development activity, is at risk of indefinite delay or outright cancellation,” said Jim Keating, Executive Vice-President, Offshore Development, Nalcor Energy. ‘This current situation presents serious consequences for a provincial economy that is already being battered by a public health crisis. Our offshore industry can contribute to Canada’s economic recovery and environmental commitments, and ensure stability for our communities now and into the future.’”

Another quote: “The offshore oil and gas industry is facing a crisis and for months we

have been asking the Government of Canada to help us through this period by ensuring we are globally competitive and putting thousands of people back to work. Without assistance from the federal government we will fall behind other leading jurisdictions who are providing incentives for exploration and development, we will lose our pre-pandemic momentum and likely miss our opportunity to lead the transition to renewable energies.” Charlene Johnson, chief executive officer of Noia.

“Investing in our offshore industry is an investment in Canada’s economic recovery, helping to unlock significant growth potential while encouraging job creation and sustained revenues for Newfoundland and Labrador.” Paul Barnes, director, Atlantic Canada and Arctic, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

“Over the past 30 years, Canada’s offshore oil and gas industry has developed a world-class construction workforce. Our skilled trade workers continue to be leaders in productivity, quality, safety and diversity, as our province quadrupled the national average in workplace diversity with 14% female skilled trade workers. Without immediate support from the Federal Government for the offshore oil and gas industry to stimulate local construction, all of our advances over the past 30 years will quickly disappear.” Darin King, executive director, Trades NL.

“Noia’s over 500 members of the supply and service sector are seriously hurting because of the current crisis. They need leadership and immediate action to help weather this storm and continue the significant contribution they make to the Canadian economy.” Karen Winsor, chief operating officer, Atlantic XL and Noia board chair.

“The oil and gas industry has an immense impact on all Newfoundland and Labrador families and businesses. Our province and country would look very different without the contribution of this industry.” Richard Alexander, executive director, Newfoundland and Labrador Employers’ Council.

“Our province, region and country depend on the oil and gas industry. Newfoundland and Labrador has proven we are a place rich in

resource, expertise and ability to deliver. It only makes sense for our federal government to support our industry and ensure we are positioned to provide safe and reliable products now and into the future.” Andrew Wadden, chair, St. John’s Board of Trade.

“I see significant opportunities for Kraken Robotics to not only support the NL oil and gas industry but to also help it grow and build upon its long-storied history.” Karl Kenny, president and CEO, Kraken Robotic Systems Inc.

“With origins in the Newfoundland & Labrador offshore, today Rutter exports to many industry sectors in over 40 countries. This industry is vital to the incubation and development of local technology companies.” Fraser Edison, president, Rutter Inc.

“The Newfoundland Offshore oil industry directly impact consumer confidence and buying decisions for residential construction and renovations. An investment in the offshore oil industry is key to stabilizing residential construction.” Curtis Mercer, interim CEO, Canadian Home Builders Association, Newfoundland and Labrador.

“For years, it was a fact of life that if you wanted a good job you had to leave Newfoundland and Labrador to find it. But the offshore industry really turned that around and people came home with their families, young folks were able to stay and have good jobs right here. Entire families are very stressed right now with all this uncertainty. We’re doing everything we can to get government and operators to act now so offshore workers and everyone in the province can have a more stable future.” David Mercer, president, Unifor Local 2121.

“Newfoundland and Labrador’s low carbon oil is a green baseline to our shoreline to secure a sustainable, just transition for Canada’s energy future.” Chris Gosse, president, Longshoreman’s Protective Union Local 1953.

“The offshore oil and gas industry is vital to Newfoundland. It affects not only me, but my family, co-workers and our business that supplies rigging to the offshore platforms.” Eddy McDonald, operations manager, North Atlantic Offshore Inc.

“Ocean Supercluster, local digital transformation, Newfoundland and Labrador technology and innovation all require a robust offshore oil and gas industry. To not provide immediate support will put the success of these efforts at risk.” Mark Cumby, regional director, energy, Hatch Ltd.

“Spending on new sewers, roads, bridges and other civil infrastructure is vital for sustainable economic growth, along with producing jobs and considerable positive spinoff activity. Provincial oil and gas revenue is a major (required) funding component, which enables Newfoundland and Labrador to invest in Infrastructure for future sustainability.” Jim Organ, executive director, Heavy Civil Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

“Despite criticism, early investments made to our oil and gas industry provided monumental benefits to this province and our country. With oil and gas still providing over 80 per cent of the world’s energy – now is the time for our federal government to invest in our low carbon product and promote this industry with pride.” Gene Mercer, owner, manager, Compass Limited, Machine & Fabrication.

“The offshore industry benefits many small companies and sole-proprietors. Given the current economic crisis, it is critical that the offshore receives adequate supports to ensure these local businesses survive.” Gary Kennedy, vice-chair, AvaLantic Alliance.

“Newfoundland and Labrador’s oil and gas industry is at a critical cross-road. Joint management can propel this province into leading the energy transition generating economic and social well-being for all Canadians. We have to act now.” Bill Fanning, president and country manager, Kvaerner Canada Limited.

“Thirty years ago, Crosbie Group forged a future in the offshore oil and gas industry. Today, with so much untapped opportunity here at home, we are disheartened that we have to turn our attention to investment outside Canada to pursue growth.” Rob Crosbie, chairman, Crosbie Group Limited.

“The support we have received from the oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador over the last 28 years has been paramount in helping us ... fight against hunger.” Eg Walters, general manager, Community Food Sharing Association.

“Newfoundland and Labrador technology companies leverage opportunities in the oil and gas sector that support digital transformation and carbon-reducing projects, helping the tech sector to grow and expand to other sectors of the ocean economy and beyond.” Paul Preston, CEO, Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Technology and Innovation.

“The oil and gas industry has been a key driver of economic prosperity in Newfoundland and Labrador, making federal government support for the industry so important to the province’s future.” Vaughn Hammond, director of provincial affairs, Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

“As an airport, we’ve seen and experienced the social and economic growth that the oil and gas sector has brought to our province. The St. John’s International Airport will continue to support the offshore oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.” Peter Avery, chief executive office, St. John’s International Airport Authority.

“Since the start of Hibernia, I’ve seen how important the revenue and jobs created by the oil sector are for our economy. I urge the Federal Government to increase our competitive advantage in this global industry.” Hubert Hutton, publisher, *Natural Resources Magazine*.

“The Port of Argentia applauds the advocacy efforts of NOIA and its member companies in highlighting the importance and impacts the offshore oil and gas industry has on our economy and our valued lifestyle. The future viability of the Port is greatly aligned with this sector and we encourage all levels of government to deliver its support to the industry in a timely and comprehensive process.” Ray Greene, CEO (Acting), Port of Argentia.

“Oil and gas is critical to C-CORE’s success. Technologies developed over 45 years for the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore have been

adapted, enabling us to export internationally to other sectors and markets.” Paul Griffin, president and CEO, C-CORE.

“Canada’s offshore industry produces some of the least carbon-intensive petroleum in the world. Our economic recovery hinges on Canada remaining a leader in the global energy transition.” Dr. Aaron Henry, senior director, natural resources and sustainable growth, Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

“Newfoundland and Labrador’s offshore oil and gas industry is leading advancement of skills, competencies and critical infrastructure that underpin rapid growth in our ocean technology sector toward long-term economic diversification and resilience.” Catherine Hogan, executive director, OceansAdvance Inc.

“Investing in our province’s offshore is investing in the communities, organizations and the very people they serve. YACC has the backs of young adults dealing with cancer because oil and gas industry companies and their employees have our back.” Geoff Eaton, executive director, Young Adult Cancer Canada.

“The offshore oil and gas sector is a vital contributor to the Newfoundland and Labrador construction industry. The future of the construction industry in our province is intricately tied to its sustainability.” Craig Drover, chair, Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association.

“Atlantic Towing, Canada’s leading Offshore Supply Vessel company, employs hundreds of people from Atlantic Canada in the Offshore Oil and Gas industry and supports numerous suppliers, education institutions and other partners as part of our ongoing activity. We know that oil will be required globally for decades to come and our Atlantic Canadian sweet crude is one of the lowest emitting products anywhere in the world. We also know that becoming carbon neutral and supporting oil and gas production are not alternative choices. Let’s leverage the incredible resources, companies, practices and stability we offer the world to grow our economy, create jobs and help transition to carbon neutral.” Wayne Power, group vice president, transportation and logistics, J.D. Irving, Limited.

“The oil and gas industry is essential to the viability of the Killick Inn and Suites in Arnold’s Cove, constructed 5 years ago, this facility was built to cater to the industry. Please support.” Andy Hennebury, owner, operator, The Killick Inn & Suites.

“The financial position of Newfoundland and Labrador is at a critical point. Without a vibrant offshore oil and gas industry which is competitive globally, this financial position will continue to deteriorate further. The Town of Lewisporte strongly encourages federal support to this industry, as was so rightfully provided for others, to create an environment promoting continued exploration and development, thereby providing a future for the offshore oil and gas industry that is environmentally sustainable and economically competitive.” Betty Clarke, mayor, Town of Lewisporte.

“Our province has boundless potential in offshore oil and gas. Conception Bay South believes in this tremendous industry and fully supports continuing the growth of this important sector.” Terry French, mayor, Conception Bay South.

“The oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador enabled Glamox Inc. to be established here 30 years ago. Glamox are now the leading lighting manufacturer and supplier to the Canadian offshore industry, Canadian Navy, Coast Guard and commercial marine markets.” Damian Coleman, sales manager.

“Newfoundland and Labrador has a credible energy transition strategy that leverages the oil and gas industry to modernize Canada’s ocean economy and accelerate clean growth innovation to meet net zero. This supports the province’s transition to a low carbon and digital economy and provides exciting and diverse career opportunities for our youth.” Stephanie Curran, safety and sustainability manager, Bay du Nord project, Equinor Canada Ltd.

“For nearly 50 years, Pennecon’s name has been synonymous with large scale developments within the construction sector of Newfoundland & Labrador, and Canada as a whole. Our evolution and growth in the construction, maintenance and marine sectors has principally been enabled by the economic activity created

by the Province's offshore oil and gas industry. With a workforce of skilled Newfoundlanders and Labradorians engaged in activities derived from this sector, we implore the Government of Canada to step-up and support the offshore industry in its time of need." David Mitchell, chief executive officer, Pennecon Limited.

"I have a female-owned business and have worked in oil and gas for over 20 years. I successfully diversified my business based on my petroleum experience. 2020 was going to be my best year ever. I can't understand why the federal government has abandoned us. Distressing." Caron Hawco, Caron Hawco Group Inc.

"The benefits go far beyond the actual oil and gas projects and are interspersed to local business and other areas of the economy. I fear that without a recovery package, in the form of incentives from the Government of Canada, the Newfoundland and Labrador offshore industry and the provincial economy will be crippled beyond repair." Judith Bobbitt, CEO, Oceans Ltd.

"Since opening its local office in 1997, TechnipFMC have hired and trained over 100 graduates from Memorial University, contributing significantly to technical research & development around the harsh North Atlantic environment." Trina Warr, business analyst, Subsea Canada, TechnipFMC.

"The offshore oil and gas sector has made substantial financial contributions to Stella's Circle to benefit marginalized members of our community, particularly in the areas of skills training and career access programs." Stella's Circle, CEO, Lisa Browne.

"DF Barnes has a long history of complex and technical work in oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador and abroad. We are proud of our company and the work we do. But we are at a crossroads. Without federal support we risk losing not only an industry but an entire economy." Sean Power, VP, business development, DF Barnes.

"Martin's Fire Safety Ltd. relies heavily on the offshore oil and gas sector, providing inspection, testing and maintenance services for fire and life

safety systems on vessels and installations servicing the offshore. A reduction in exploration and production activity will have a significant negative impact on revenues and level of employment." Brad Suter, president and general manager, Martin's Fire Safety Ltd.

"Cox & Palmer is deeply committed to our clients, our community, and to building a bright future for this province. Investment in our offshore industry is critical and would have a substantial impact on the growth and success of our vibrant province and the businesses that operate within it." Stephanie Hickman, Cox & Palmer.

"The experience PAL Aerospace gained in offshore ice surveillance has been critical in catapulting our company onto the world stage for maritime surveillance. The offshore industry gave us an opportunity to develop new technologies, refine innovative practices and become global leaders in the fields of ice management and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance." Stephen Dinn, vice-president of business development, PAL Aerospace.

"I have published the oil and gas magazine for three decades always believing that we could be as profitable and even more lucrative than Norway and the North Sea. This is not the time to give in, it's the time to get stronger and to implement oil and gas drilling incentives so that we can bridge to new energy with certainty. We are not getting to renewables without oil and gas so doing the right thing and producing as much light crude is the absolute right thing to do." Tina Olivero, publisher and CEO of *The OGM*.

"The offshore oil and gas industry has helped me grow my business and provide stable employment for my team. Please support an industry critical to the future of thousands." Joe Coffey, owner, Upstream.

"Atlantic Offshore Medical Services is a Newfoundland and Labrador company formed here, in large part to service the oil and gas industry. This industry has facilitated our growth and has fostered our company into being a best in class provider of primary and emergency healthcare and occupational healthcare to industry. Today we are one of the longest standing private entities in the world in our line

of service deliverables and without support from the local oil and gas industry our future will be uncertain. The time is now to support the oil and gas industry which has supported so many local businesses and helped them expand to providing services, nationally and internationally. Without this support, the oil and gas sector will diminish and so will local businesses here in our province.” Liam O’Shea, chief executive officer, Atlantic Offshore Medical Services.

“The local benefits that accrue to the marine sector in St. John’s Harbour as a result of the oil and gas industry is significant. A. Harvey and the vessel operators provide substantial wages and purchases that are felt throughout the economy.” Geoff Cunningham, vice-president, operations, A. Harvey Group.

“The Newfoundland and Labrador oil and gas industry has created sustainable employment for many businesses of a high-quality nature. It has allowed us to expand our growth and employee base throughout the knowledge we have gained for this industry. If the industry cannot survive neither will the jobs – this would completely close our business operations in Atlantic Canada.” Bruce McNeill, president, Eastcoast Offshore Supply Ltd.

“We are a Newfoundland and Labrador based global tech company. Although we are not directly involved in the oil and gas business, we rely heavily on it. To be competitive globally, we need to be based in a place where we can attract the best talent and that has vibrant communities. If the oil and gas sector does not rebound quickly, our province will not be a viable place for many businesses to operate. It really pains me to say that but it’s the cold hard reality.” Craig A. Rowe, CEO, ClearRisk Inc.; board chair, Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Technology and Innovation.

“The offshore oil and gas industry has provided McInnes Cooper with the opportunity for growth and contributing to our communities, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador but across all of Atlantic Canada. We are able to give generously of our volunteer time and donate to charitable organizations in need across our region. Law school graduates want to come home to Newfoundland and Labrador so they can live and develop their legal careers here at home, in

our energy sector.” Denis Mahoney, partner, McInnes Cooper.

“The growth of our company was possible because of the growth and success of our clients, many of which are either directly or indirectly employed by the industry. The offshore oil and gas industry significantly helped the people of our province by creating jobs and opportunities that otherwise would not have been possible. The Newfoundland and Labrador oil and gas industry matters, and we need the federal government to recognize this and provide incentives to keep the industry going for generations to come.” Brian Henley, president, Alex G. Henley & Associates Ltd.

“I have been blessed to have had a career of more than forty years in the oil and gas industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a business person and human resource professional I have worked for, partnered and owned a number of businesses servicing the Newfoundland and Labrador oil and gas industry. I am proud that I have been in a position to hire hundreds of young people from our province in good paying long term careers, many of whom had gone on to senior management within their organizations. I can’t imagine the situation Newfoundland and Labrador would be in over the past forty years without the oil and gas industry.” Philip Whelan, business development, Horizon Maritime.

“Our ask is small in comparison to the billions that the Canadian government has received over the years from Newfoundland and Labrador’s offshore industry. We are not asking for a hand out. We are asking for a hand up. Investing in our offshore significantly contributes to the economy of Canada, ensures that thousands of Canadians are employed and our industry remains globally competitive. It is time to show strong leadership by Prime Minister Trudeau for all Canadians and the future of Canada’s economy by supporting our offshore industry.” Andrew Bell, president and owner, K&D Pratt Group, Inc.

“The Newfoundland and Labrador offshore oil and gas industry are important to PF Collins, as it has allowed us to grow and employ highly skilled Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, recognized worldwide as leaders in logistics.”

Susan Collins, vice president, business development, PF Collins.

“East Coast Catering (ECC), provides delicious hot meals and clean living conditions on-board many offshore oil & gas operating units off of Newfoundland & Labrador’s coast. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, ECC proudly employed 215 diverse associates. Of those, 99% are residents of NL and more than 40% of our team represents women, First Nations, new Canadians, and persons with disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our company and its workforce with both offshore production vessels and drilling rigs ceasing their operations. While ECC’s financial losses are great, the economic impact for many of our dedicated employees and the impact on their families is even greater and more far-reaching. We request that the Federal Government, a long-term partner in NL’s offshore, support our local offshore oil and gas industry to ensure it remains viable. Our future and the future of our employees and their families depends on it.”
Michael H. Deley, CEO, East Coast Catering.

“The Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industries Association (Noia) was founded in 1977 to represent the supply and service sector of the offshore oil and gas industry. Today, Noia represents almost 500 member organizations worldwide which are involved in, or benefit from, the oil and gas industry of Newfoundland and Labrador. Noia members are a diverse representation of businesses that range from offshore supply boats and helicopters, health and safety equipment and training, engineering solutions and fabricators to law firms and personnel agencies.”

End of quotes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: Madam Speaker, I wanted to highlight that the importance of our oil sector is not only important to all of us in this Chamber, but to all of the people around this province and the 20,000-plus people that work in that industry.

As we’ve heard from all of my quotes, there are a lot of people that benefit greatly from the oil and gas industry and we have to stand up for that

industry. That’s our oil industry speaking to us. They are speaking for all of us. They are speaking up on defence of our economy in ways the government opposite has not. But no Liberal in this province or Ottawa is delivering. No Liberal is listening. No Liberal is giving Newfoundland and Labrador a fighting chance to resurrect and sustain our high-growth potential economy on our own steam, using our own resources and companies and skilled labour and brilliant expertise. We can stand on our own in this country if only Ottawa will treat us fairly and stop throttling our best opportunities for growth.

Maybe someone should send the federal Liberals a copy of the McKinsey report with its sections on oil opportunities. Maybe the Members opposite ought to read that report again before wasting yet another colossal amount of time searching for opportunities that are right under our noses, waiting for a government with the willingness and fortitude to act.

Madam Speaker, let’s talk about fairness in the Canadian federation, because we are, after all, supposed to be an equal member of 10 in this federation called Canada. What this province needs in this country is a fair shake. We need a federal-provincial targeted population growth strategy that will bring opportunities and jobs to our people and our communities.

The Constitution even allows Ottawa to give us special treatment, if that’s what it takes to narrow the disparity and put us on a level field in the federation. Before we even have to talk about special treatment, we should be talking about fair treatment, even handedness.

This country has health and social transfers that are based on population rather than need. The more people we lose, the less we are eligible to receive in transfers. As our jobs have dwindled, our job-earning youth have moved away leaving retired seniors, the people most reliant on health spending, without a population base of young, healthy taxpayers to sustain our economy.

Our population pyramid is inverted from the way a healthy population ought to be. So we invite immigrants to come here with their young families, but without the jobs they are going

through the revolving door to greener pastures west of here. The plan is not working.

The definition of insanity is to keep on doing the things that failed to deliver, hoping for better results. It's time to do things differently. One of those things is to reform our country's health and social transfers so they respond to the actual needs rather than mere numbers.

The other thing we need to reform is equalization. That program was entrenched in the Constitution as a means of ensuring that no province that suffers a big drop in revenue has to cut services or raise taxes or endure heavy debt to make ends meet. The federal Liberals came to office promising to reform equalization. They got elected and then they reneged on their promise. To be fair, the federal Conservatives didn't get it right either.

The principle entrenched in the Constitution is simple and straightforward. Let's read it into the record, Madam Speaker. Equalization and regional disparities, commitment respecting public services, section 36(2): "Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation."

That is very straightforward: sufficient revenues, reasonably comparable levels of public service and reasonably comparable levels of taxation. In other words, if revenues fall, Ottawa has an obligation to step in to secure those services with fiscal transfers. So taxes do not need to rise, services do not need to be cut and debt levels do not need to be increased. That's right there in the Constitution, the basic law of the country. No one is making this up. It's not a policy that we've manufactured. It's Canadian constitutional law.

What's not simple or straightforward is the federal rules that give effect to equalization. Ottawa has imposed artificial caps. They calculate revenues and fiscal capacity in ways that just don't make sense and aren't fair. They impose a three-year lag that makes the entire program unresponsive to emerging needs.

Instead of getting fair help when we need it and deserve it, we are getting nothing.

We are considered to be a have province under the failed rules that Ottawa has invented to distort the way they meet their obligation. Other provinces like Quebec can have revenues excepted from their calculations making them seem poorer than they are. They are benefiting from our Upper Churchill resources in grossly unfair ways and they're still getting equalization on top of that. Before the pandemic, equalization-receiving provinces were posting headlines about having too much money to spend – more than they needed. They were boasting surpluses, introducing new spending programs, cutting taxes, reducing debt, all the while receiving federal equalization that we were not entitled to under the distorted rules.

Meanwhile, the equalization-deprived provinces, suffering from the collapse of world oil prices, were struggling to make ends meet. No wonder the West was furious. Alberta and Saskatchewan were crying foul loudly enough that Ottawa had no choice but to take notice. Our province, on the other hand, was making nice and saying nothing, refusing to make waves. They were heard, we were ignored. We were taken for granted. Until federal programs are reformed to be truly equitable and fair, until we actually receive our fair share in this federation, we should never be talking about amputations and triage in a desperate bid to make ends meet. Give us our fair share, give us fiscal room to breathe and then we will make government reform decisions in a calm, progressive way, without the panic we're seeing right now.

If we were receiving the \$2 billion per year that Nova Scotia or New Brunswick or Manitoba is receiving this year, and pretty much every year, we would not have a deficit problem. Those provinces had the fiscal room to make government reform decisions without an atmosphere of panic. Not us, and that's fundamentally unfair.

We're not asking for a handout or an unfair benefit, we're asking simply for what the Constitution promises: fairness, equitability, even treatment. Even the parliamentary budget officer calculated that we ought to be receiving hundreds of millions in equalization each year. It

may be more than that now, given the state that the Liberals have left our oil industry. Let's make one thing clear, our goal is not to be an equalization-receiving province. Our goal is to stand on our own, operating a sustainable economy on our own steam, based on the strength of our massive base of resources and tremendous pool of talent. We can do that. We've proved that we can do that. We already did it before on our own steam, a decade ago.

We can all remember that sense of pride when we came off equalization, on the strength of our own resources, industries, revenues and jobs. We can do it again and we will, but we need to stop the unfair, federal treatment that is actually serving as an impediment to sustainable growth.

We need people to understand that Ottawa is actually preventing us from operating on our own steam. They are bleeding us of opportunities and jobs, which is bleeding us of population, which is putting us farther and farther away from our goal of sustainability. They are blocking our oil sector from growing. They are killing the sector we already have, killing our jobs, killing our employers, killing our reputation because some in that federal cabinet, including our own cabinet representative, simply do not like oil. They think the entire industry is dirty and needs to go.

Perhaps Minister O'Regan and Prime Minister Trudeau fly around the country and the world on electric planes. I don't think so. The world will continue to need oil for the foreseeable future and while we are eager to transition from fossil fuels to clean energy – and we're actually leading on that front – the world is not going to stop needing oil and petroleum products and plastics and all the products made from plastic anytime soon.

We're better to have that oil produced here from our own light sweet crude, generated ethically in a way that creates local jobs, then simply kill the local industry and let the other regimes of the world take our jobs and benefits away.

We need to be singing the praises of the Newfoundland and Labrador oil industry, just as Norway is singing the praises of theirs, because a balanced economy, even one that is driving

renewable energy, can still have a thriving oil sector as part of that picture.

It's time to give an ultimatum to the ideologues in the federal Liberal Party who have decided to let our province's strongest growth industry go the way of the dodo. This is a resource we need to be developing and Ottawa has to be there so we can get jobs growing here.

Let's also get federal support to drive our hydro sector, because that was the plan all along in the 2007 energy strategy, to let our oil sector help us transition our economy to clean, green, renewable energy, but not to kill our oil industry before that was able to happen. We need to be driving our economy using all our resources and all our opportunities, because we have many that could be sustaining us.

This past week we were treated to a news conference where the Premier abandoned his role as the chief advocate for our province and instead became the leading cheerleader for his federal friend, Seamus O'Regan. Minister O'Regan has been a dismally poor representative for our province, more likely to tell us what we can't have than to tell Ottawa what we need and deserve. Once again, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador were disappointed and underwhelmed by an announcement by the federal and provincial Liberal governments. After so-called months of discussion, the latest announcement does little to get our offshore oil industry back to work any time soon.

While Justin Trudeau may be a friend of our new Premier, he is no friend of Newfoundland and Labrador. Just like his father, Pierre Trudeau, who refused to make Newfoundland and Labrador the principal beneficiary of our offshore oil, Justin Trudeau is trying to destroy the very industry that was doing so much to lift us from the poverty we were in.

By contrast, just like his father did before him – just like John Crosbie, who delivered the Atlantic Accord for our province – Ches Crosbie, along with our caucus, are standing up –

MR. TRIMPER: Point of order.

MR. WAKEHAM: Sorry.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

MR. WAKEHAM: The hon. Member for Windsor Lake, along with our caucus –

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think the Member has already corrected himself.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. WAKEHAM: The hon. Member for Windsor Lake, along with our caucus, is standing up for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WAKEHAM: He is fighting where our Premier will not. While the Premier is standing next to Minister O'Regan telling us a few crumbs are good enough, we are standing up for our offshore workers, demanding fairness, demanding more. We are standing up for jobs and fairness that these Liberals are unable and unwilling to deliver.

This is how we transform our economy, by putting our brightest and best to work in the very industry that has been employing them and enriching our province for years. The solution is not so complicated. It's perfectly logical and perfectly doable. Put our resources to work for us and put our people to work in the process.

Now, let's talk about loopy ideas. Instead of supporting our oil industry, as Noia and others have requested, Ottawa tries to pacify us with one-liners in their Throne Speech. Like the new Atlantic Loop concept – one miserable line – and the Premier and the Natural Resources minister were not even looped in.

The Premier claims he talks to Ottawa everyday; yet, this supposedly ground-breaking, national growth initiative was not even raised with him. That's all the proof we need that this is not really a serious proposal or, if it a serious

proposal at all, then it's not aimed at Newfoundland and Labrador, but aimed at Quebec. When Quebec is brought to the table on East Coast energy initiatives, it's never a good thing for Newfoundland and Labrador.

So it's more worrying than anything that our own Premier wasn't briefed on an initiative that Quebec is so eager to celebrate. It sounds like a strategy to take advantage of a province when it's down. Is this the way that Ottawa plans to deliver rate mitigation? We've heard precious little about that despite repeated promises that something was coming. Are we going to be forced to relinquish control of our hydro resources in order to bring Ottawa to the table on rate mitigation?

That project was approved with federal support as a national green energy initiative benefiting the entire country. It's not fair that our province and people should have to bear the full burden of overruns that happen on megaprojects like this. Ottawa should step forward with a rate mitigation plan that does not hold us over a barrel in the process. We can all remember being held over a barrel and having our pockets emptied when the Upper Churchill was developed. It's made us very wary of federal schemes to benefit the country when they end up hurting us.

The fact that our new Premier and his Natural Resources Minister had no inkling about this Loop project makes everyone more than a little nervous, something's up. Something that's not in Newfoundlander and Labrador's best interest. We had the same wary feeling when Minister O'Regan announced the so-called new and improved Atlantic Accord. It was smoke and mirrors on a scheme that had nothing to do with making Newfoundland and Labrador the principal beneficiary of our oil and gas resources, as we had been promised by law.

This province has all the resources and the skilled people it needs to be thriving on its own steam. We are not prepared to be backed into a corner and taken advantage of by a government that is more than willing to deprive us of the benefits of our own opportunities.

When the solutions are so clear and straightforward it boggles the mind that instead

of acting on them this government is going on another exercise to get advice. The budget was full of rhetoric about a wonderful new team that is being established to give us the advice we need to transform our economy. Quite frankly, we've heard it all before. We heard it when they took a million dollars from the Treasury to hire McKinsey. We already have those crystal clear messages from McKinsey and even from Mills about the kinds of things we need to be doing.

Now we have a new team raking up the same ground that by now ought to be bringing forth fruit. There's a phrase called implementation failure. It is used to describe what happens when you've been given the right advice but you've failed to put it into action. Implementation failure is the hallmark of Liberal governance in this province for the past five years. Another drive down the road of consultation is just going to lead to the same advice we've already heard.

When a government is unprepared to act on the advice it receives, what's the point of seeking the advice in the first place? When the government refuses to take on Ottawa for its role in driving us into the ground, what's the point of getting the advice that Ottawa needs to be a huge part of the solution?

Still, we have yet another Premier who is more worried about ruffling feathers in Ottawa than protecting the goose that's been laying the golden egg in this province for years. Ottawa is failing us and the Liberals opposite are letting it happen. This federation is not working for us, not since this province decided to get cozy and non-confrontational, despite our worsening challenges.

The new Premier can hire all the economic gurus that he wants, but if he fails to get Ottawa's help and refuses even to try, then it's just going to be more of the same failure and slippage that our economy has seen these past five years. By all accounts, that is precisely the path that this new Premier is taking. The same failed path as his predecessor, with the same failed Cabinet telling him that everything is hunky-dory as it possibly could be.

How much longer will we need to wait for this latest round of deliberations to lead to policy suggestions? Are we really going to hear

anything different from the advice that McKinsey and Mills and others have already provided? What's the impact of having to wait still more weeks and months and probably years? While these Liberals fiddle, not only is the clock ticking, but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are watching thousands and even tens of thousands of jobs evaporate before their eyes. Those years, those opportunities and, in many cases, those investment dollars and jobs and people are not going to come back.

This is not just a fiscal crisis, not just an economic crisis; it's a crisis of governance, a crisis of failed leadership. The same old approach is going to deliver the same old results, and those results are not jobs, jobs, jobs. That's left people angry and agitated and rallying in the street. We've seen them recently on the steps of Confederation Building.

People are not happy. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, they're scared. They don't have the luxury of a government job in the Premier's office or the minister's office or the government Members' offices. They're at the very edge and in danger of falling over. Many have already fallen over. They're not just desperate; they're angry because people know it doesn't have to be this way. People are not stupid. People see the opportunities where this government cannot, and we see those opportunities as well. Day after day, though, we're told be patient, we're doing our best; no, they're not. We can do better.

Frankly, we ought to be working in tandem with Alberta and Saskatchewan, our natural allies in this fight, to rally Canadians to our cause. These are things we can be doing here at home. There are things that we can be doing nationally and with our national allies in this country. We have a strong case to make. It's time we had a government willing to make the case and fight for Newfoundland and Labrador, to fight for fairness, to fight for jobs.

Our party's mantra is jobs, jobs, jobs. That's the main thing our economy needs. It's what our people really need; it's what they're crying out for. McKinsey tells us that job opportunities for local people are there. Mills echoes the same sentiments. Trades NL tells us the job opportunities for local people are there. Noia tells us the job opportunities for local people are

there. It's this government that tells us they aren't doing enough. Frankly, that's not good enough.

It's time for a government that is working to make those jobs a reality instead of making excuses. The Liberals say they're doing enough; we say we can do better. People are discounting their words and instead measuring results and this government is failing to measure up. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's not about party, it never was; it's actually about people. It's about putting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first and it's the responsibility of elected leaders to show leadership in the face of crisis, not to blame the crisis for failing to act.

We're determined to be different and to act differently from the government opposite. Our party is listening to the people. We've had five years in Opposition to do this and we know the people expect and demand and deserve better. Our party is determined to deliver a different approach to governance that our people are demanding. Our party is determined to deliver jobs where the Liberals have failed. Our party is showing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians our vision for a different way of doing things that will actually deliver results and jobs. The Liberals are showing people a party mired in the same old rhetoric and failed approaches that after five years have left Newfoundlanders and Labradorians worse off than people anywhere else in the country.

All the spin and all the feel-good rhetoric and all the happy songs and patriotic ads in the world are not going to change the reality that people face around their dinner tables. If the rhetoric doesn't lead to jobs, what is it really worth at the end of the day? Spinning a good story will not lift the province from the downward spiral it's on. You don't just tell people that everything is going to be okay, you have to show them.

Hope is not a policy. Hope is a product of policies that deliver results. Hope is what people feel when they have job opportunities. Creating the conditions for job growth is a policy. Standing up for fairness is a policy. Seizing opportunities is a policy. Requiring a Newfoundland and Labrador benefits agreement is a policy. Without policies like this, then all of

the talk of hope is nothing more than hot air, smoke and mirrors, empty rhetoric.

Vain talk of hope doesn't pay the bills, it doesn't buy the groceries, it doesn't give our young people a job to keep them home and it doesn't keep your family or your business out of bankruptcy or the lights on in your community. If the Liberal government have nothing more to deliver than feel-good rhetoric, that's all the Liberals have to show after five years in government, that's not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

In yesterday's budget, the most important number in this budget is the number of jobs that will be lost this year, over 13,000 jobs and no evidence of a plan for how jobs will be created; 13,000 jobs is huge. This budget has to be about more than just numbers. It lacks the words that the people want to hear, that the government has a plan to keep people, especially our young people, in our province.

A lot of what they've announced is not new money. Remove those pieces and it's a pretty thin budget. It's a budget on autopilot without the leadership we need. A lot of buzzwords about every sector, but nothing substantive here to back up the talk with action that will create jobs.

Not enough for the oil sector – the speech clearly shows how important the oil sector is but it should have been harder on Ottawa for not delivering, and it wasn't hard on Ottawa at all. Not even an offer to collaborate on the grand solution we desperately need. A lot of talk about the great progress they've made; lost jobs is not great progress. Call it what it is, a crisis. Ottawa won't answer our call for urgent collaboration if we pretend things are going well when they're not. Leadership from Ottawa is missing. It feels like we're on our own down here.

What reassurances do the people of the province have that this government has a plan to create jobs so that young people could stay in this province and make their lives here? More waiting for another plan down the road while McKinsey and Mills gather dust. All these things we could have been doing already but weren't. This is really a place-hold budget, I guess, waiting for another report.

There are lots of things that could be done differently. We could be the champions of our offshore oil industry including taking immediate actions on West White Rose project and Terra Nova FPSO. We should be working with businesses to provide incentives to support them. Businesses are the economic drivers and we need to make sure they continue to do the job creators. We have to stop the population drain but we need a reason for people to stay. Our focus is jobs, jobs, jobs.

The Premier has been borrowing quite a lot from the 2019 Blue Book from the outset but only bits and pieces, not the bigger picture which demands federal-provincial collaboration and to rescue our economy and jobs. We are pleased to see that this government realizes that the PC Party has the good ideas and have now adopted them as their own, such as \$25 child care, insulin pumps and the \$25 million Small Business Assistance Program. Also glad to see they took our suggestion for a pre-feasibility study for a road to the North, but there are many questions on the child care program and the Small Business Assistance Program. Obviously, the devil is in the details.

The Liberal government has had five budgets now and never did anything. They may have a new leader, but there is the same pattern of inaction and kicking the can further down the road.

Mr. Speaker, I spent a lot of time talking about numbers and budgets and everything else today, but when it all comes down to it, it's about the impact on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's about the impact on individuals living in our district. It's about taking action to help people in our province who are crying out for help.

The Budget Speech mentions the word reimagine a number of times. So let me talk about my district for a minute. Let me talk about the gentleman whose house is about to fall into the ocean. Reimagine that for a minute. For months now we've been trying to get government to take a look at that house. To say that when you step off his balcony, you step into the ocean, coastal erosion has done that and it needs to get addressed. Somebody needs to step

up and take a look at this particular gentleman's house in Mainland before it becomes another Daniel's Harbour. Sitting around procrastinating is not good enough. We need to take action.

We have many communities without water. In West Bay, in my district, the whole community has been trying to work to secure a source of water. There is a source of water next door, but what we do need is we need support from the minister and government to make it happen. We don't need to procrastinate on it; we just need action. We just need to get it done.

I've talked already about the community of Coal Brook and the fact they've been waiting more than five years for a kilometre of pavement to be upgraded and resurfaced and we still can't make it happen. After five years we're still waiting, despite it being on the list, despite it being recommended by their own local Transportation and works officials in my district. That's the kind of support the people of Newfoundland and Labrador need. It's not rhetoric; it's action.

They announced yesterday a 10-year health accord. That sounds wonderful. We're going to plan for another 10 years. I can tell you the Health department is already filled with reports and recommendations on reforming health care. The last thing we need is to put another hold on taking action.

The NLMA today highlighted the significant challenges of over a hundred thousand people without a family doctor. The response was: We have more doctors per capita than we ever had in our history. They're just not in the right areas. Well, fix it. Do something about it. Don't just talk about it. Don't wait 10 years to move on it. That's the problem. We fail to take action.

Let me talk about medical transportation and how important that is to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially those of us who live outside the urban centres. People are not taking appointments, failing to go to their appointments because they have no way of getting there. The minister earlier talked about equality of health care. People outside of the city know we can't have a tertiary care hospital in every community. They understand that. They understand we're going to

have to travel for health services, but they do want equitable access and affordability.

Whether you live five miles or 500 miles from a tertiary care centre in the city, you shouldn't have to worry about how you're going to get there. You should be able to just get up and go and not have to worry; someone has looked after your transportation; someone has looked after your accommodations. That's so easy to do and should be done. If you want to start with health reform, start there. Start making equitable access and affordability for people.

Let me tell you about the young gentleman in my district who because of our air ambulance system wasn't able to get an air ambulance because he wasn't considered an emergency. He was a burn victim, so what did they do? They put him on a road ambulance for nine hours with an ICU nurse giving him morphine every so often so that he could get to a burn unit in the City of St. John's. That's not acceptable. That needs to change. We need to revise our air ambulance. We need to revise our road ambulance system.

As a matter of fact, I believe there's another report somewhere in the Department of Health and Community Services that talked about reform some years ago. I still don't think it's been implemented.

Let's talk about ophthalmology. How many people in this Chamber know someone in their district that has waited for months, if not years, for an ophthalmology procedure that would allow them to see clearly again? I know all about it because my father is waiting more than a year; 96 years old next month and he's still living in his house in Placentia. The reason he's able to do that is not because of supports he receives, but it's because of the community; the great neighbours that he has in that place. That's what allows him to stay at home and now he's about to go blind. He's losing his eyesight. For over a year he's been on a list to get what equates to a 15-minute procedure done. He's no longer able to watch his favourite hockey game or team or even watch baseball without challenges. That's just not good enough, and there are many like him.

There are people in my own district who have written the minister who are even talking about can they get permission to go to Alberta or funded to go to Alberta to get a procedure done. That needs to get addressed, and whether it's the NLMA or the government, whoever, both of them, need to get together and get this fixed. For too long the people in our province have been waiting much too long, too many months, too many years. There is a solution so let's get it done. Get the NLMA and the minister together and let's get it done, let's get that problem fixed.

We hear a lot now, of course, we hear every update on our COVID situation; we hear lots about the issues around the number of cases that we have or don't have, but we're not hearing anything about the number of postponements of procedures that have been cancelled or surgeries that were cancelled. We need to be getting updates on those. The people of the province need to know that our health care system is getting back up to speed. The minister, with the RHAs, needs to send that message to the people, to make sure that there's nobody being left behind. That, in fact, all of the people that require health care whose appointments were cancelled or whose surgeries were cancelled that they have been contacted, that they have been rescheduled. Those are the things that matter to people. It's not hard to do, it takes communication, but we have to do it. We can't simply allow people to sit at home and wonder.

I know you all get calls about those things, because I do. I'm sure they're not unique to my district. They're a problem for all of us, but we need to find a way to address it. We need to reassure the people that their procedures will be carried out, that their surgeries will be done.

We need to talk about how well we're doing with that. I would like to see the minister provide an update, if it's weekly, maybe it's every two weeks, and give us an idea of what the wait-list is now for those procedures or surgeries that were cancelled, and get that out there so the public can have some reassurance about it.

Those are the things that matter to the people. It's not about just numbers. It's got to be about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's got to be about helping that individual, as I said, whose house is about to fall into the ocean. We

can't let that happen. It's not a big fix, we just need somebody from an engineering background, somebody that can go out and take a look and see what might need to be done. That's just one example.

The road to Fox Island River – I know the former minister of Transportation is well aware and has done some research on that one – that's another issue. I'm sure there are issues with coastal erosion all over this province that needs to get addressed. But I think we need to get out there and let people know that we're working on it, that it will be done.

I look forward to the new Minister of Transportation getting back to me on the Cold Brook and getting that done.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) even close.

MR. WAKEHAM: Yeah, because it deserves to be done.

So those are things that matter, Mr. Speaker, those are the things that are important. That's what this budget is all about. That's what we're all about. It's providing services to the people of the province, to providing services to ensure that, at the end of the day, we're listening. We're not like the guy who goes out and basically asks: What are your problems? And we find out what they are. As I mentioned earlier in my speech today, we have to find those solutions and we need to find them now.

I think that is where I want to stop and talk about – I will stop there, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to take a more positive tone, I think, to the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I, personally, am very excited about the budget. I know that the Finance Minister has described this as a pandemic budget. Obviously, this is a

very difficult time. Oil prices are very low. We don't really know what the next six months are going to hold in terms of health-wise, but I'm very confident in what we're doing to help the people of the province with what we have.

I'm very pleased with the budget. I'm very pleased with our new team. I'm very impressed with our new Premier. I'm very optimistic for the future and a lot of people that I speak with are also very optimistic. I certainly don't agree with the Member's comments from Stephenville - Port au Port.

I'm going to focus on the budget and what it means for the constituents of Mount Scio and then, if I have time, I'm going to go into some of the Digital Government and Service NL elements of the budget.

The key one for me is the \$25 a day child care, which, obviously, is going to positively impact my life and my disposable income in a few years time. As we know, women in the province have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and in a lot of instances women don't make as much as their partner and they often stay home. If there's a choice, one of them have to do that.

I was just doing some math there around the child care subsidy. I know that many regulated daycares charge \$44 a day, and we're on the wait-list for a few of them, even though he's not even born yet. That's the difference between \$25 and \$44 is \$95 a week. That's \$95 extra disposable income per child under 5 between the eligible ages that my constituents will be able to have extra income in their household. I think that's hugely beneficial to many, many people in the province.

I also want to chat about some of the things that I hear when people talk about minimum wage and fairness. I know the \$25 a day daycare is amazing. I just want to correct, while we're talking about daycare, I read a lot of comments, for example, on social media around people saying: If someone's on minimum wage, how can they afford child care at all?

One thing I've been very proud of is the child care subsidies that we have. A lot of people don't realize how amazing the child care subsidy programs are for the people of the province,

which I know many of my constituents take advantage of.

For example, if a family makes under \$35,000 a year – that's their household income – they get 100 per cent subsidized child care, which is incredible. When you're looking at the math of how much income they get plus their expenses and you look at the full cost of child care, it doesn't work. But when you look at all the subsidy programs and everything, it does work. It is working for many of my constituents. It's not easy, but it is working. So I'm very proud of those programs and I'm also very proud of the \$25 a day child care that will launch in 2021.

Another program I'd like to highlight is the Insulin Pump Program. I don't really know many people with diabetes but when I went door to door for the first time, I met a lot of people who were personally impacted by diabetes. Their choice in the election was simply which party had the best plan for managing diabetes. If they a child or a brother or an aunt, that was their sole decision point.

I've learned a lot about the program. I'm very excited about the expanded program. I'm excited to learn exactly what the criteria are. With an extra \$3.3 million, I believe, for the Insulin Pump Program, I'm very hopeful that some of my constituents who were not previously eligible will now be eligible for that, which will have a significant impact on both their disposable income and their health outcomes. Hopefully, we'll be able to in the long term save health care costs as they're better able to manage their diabetes.

Another program I'm very proud about is the \$2.1 million that we're continuing to invest in the Metrobus and GoBus passes, which I assume supports the announcement we've made around the passes for low-income individuals in the metro area which affects a significant number of my constituents.

It's hugely important that they can get around, Mr. Speaker. This means they don't have to make a decision between coming to visit me in my office or going to get groceries or going across town to get a lower priced item or discounted item, for example. It means they have more flexibility when they can go to

appointments. Maybe they enrolled their children in free activities.

I think this has a huge impact on my constituents and people of the province, and families and women. It's just amazing. I'm looking forward to seeing the results of the pilot, whenever that comes out. Hopefully a lot of people in the province will take advantage of that program.

One of the programs my constituents get a lot of use out of is the Community Healthy Living Fund. I'd also like to give a plug for that. In Mount Scio we have lots of organizations that apply for funding through that program: Rabbittown Community Centre; we have Rainbow Riders; we have Easter Seals; O'Brien Farm Foundation; we have the Eating Disorder Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, just to name a few. They all provide amazing work for the province and are able to avail of some of those programs. It's hugely beneficial.

Then, the new program, which I'm very proud of, is the Emergency Support Fund for Sport. In Mount Scio we have a lot of sports organizations in addition to, say, Rainbow Riders, who help children with horseback riding. It's not really about the sport, but it is kind of a recreation sport. We have the St. John's baseball association, Green Belt Tennis Club. We have the Aquarena in Mt. Scio and the St. John's Legends swimming club, some tae kwon do organizations and the Canadian lifeguard society. Lots of different sports organization, which I'm sure will apply for the Emergency Support Fund for Sport. I'm very proud of that as well.

The small business community fund as well in the budget. That's going to be a huge benefit for the community sector organizations in my district, specifically, the \$5 million for the community sector organizations and the \$25 million, I believe, for the small businesses. A lot of small businesses in my district that I help regularly, just trying to go through different government programs and trying to interpret the health guidelines recently. I did a huge amount of work doing that with them. I'm very pleased about that program.

As well as the craft brewers. I have an owner of a small craft brewery in my district. I've also

been helping some craft brewers in other areas of the province. I'm very excited about the discounts – depending on the volume they produce, discounts of 95 per cent to 15 per cent, which will alleviate more than \$1 million in savings in the industry. I'm hugely supportive of that. Once we understand better the details of the program, I'm looking forward to working with the craft brewers and understanding how that benefits their businesses and, then, what that's able to do for them and for the rest of my constituents who enjoy drinking their craft beer. That's also very important.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to chat a bit about my Department of Digital Government and Service NL. This is my first budget as minister, so it's kind of a new experience. It's been great.

I'd firstly like to thank the staff of the Queen's Printer. They are often overlooked and probably underappreciated, but they kind of stayed up all night printing all of these documents that we have. They always do a very professional job and they were up all night printing these, all the budget documents for all of us and the media and everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Also, to the Department of Finance staff, we don't always think about who prints the documents. They were up all night doing that, so I just wanted to call them out especially.

I would like to chat a bit about motor vehicle registration. I know many MHAs and constituents have been having some challenges with getting appointments and call-ins, and so we recognize that. We are working to resolve that. We have been able to help most people. I think we have 200 emails that are left to go through, so we're getting there. We're getting through our backlog.

Part of what we're going to do in moving forward with Digital Government and Service NL is have a focus on customer service and look at it specifically from that angle. I think we have done a great job during COVID-19. I know it's been very disruptive for some constituents.

By September 18, we handled 328,000 transactions for motor vehicle registration by phone or in person. I know it was very difficult for people. They're used to being able to walk in at their convenience. We're looking at changing that model. Right now they are phoning and booking appointments to come in in person, but we were able to do 328,000 transactions. So it is quite significant, the volume that we are doing. That doesn't include the ones that happened online, which was, I think, just over 200,000.

The options available: people could phone in, there are drop boxes at all of the motor vehicle registration offices that people can drop information off in. Then you can book an appointment online to go in in person. I also understand if you showed up with an emergency they wouldn't turn you away.

I also want to thank the staff there because they've had to change their model of how they operate. It's been very difficult for them, but they've done an amazing job helping people. So I wanted to give them a shout-out.

We are going to be looking at how we can deliver those services better. We're looking at new systems to try and improve the phone system, improve how people book those appointments so you don't have to wait on the phone for a while, someone will call you back. We are looking at those improvements. Certainly, they will be in place before the next high season so our constituents won't have to, I guess, deal with as many frustrations next time. So it's a significant focus for us.

I also want to talk about the digital part of Digital Government and Service NL and what's going to be important for us. When we think about the role that, say, a website plays – and I know the provincial government's website is kind of broad and quite wide ranging. The year from March 13 to September 9, last year, there were 3.2 million people visiting our government's website – 3.2 million from March 13 to September 9. This year for that period it was 19.9 million. So a significant increase of people visiting the government's website looking for information, needing something. They just didn't come for fun. They obviously needed something, wanted to look something up, wanted to find out something. I think part of

what we're going to be focusing on is how do we make sure that those 19.9 million visits – the people visit our website – how we make sure they get what they need when they come there?

It's not necessarily about press releases, not about having information in PDFs, but really how do we make sure that when everyone in the province goes to our website to find out information, they find it as quickly and as easily as possible; they get the answer so that they don't have to call, they don't have to be inconvenienced, they don't have to call *Open Line*. They can just find the answer and all the information and then be happy.

That's kind of a big shift, I think, thinking about the website, let's say, as our number-one traffic branch. Right now, I'm sure it's Mount Pearl location, but our website would far surpass the Mount Pearl branch in terms of volumes.

In addition to the findability of information, the MyGovNL platform that the teams have built has been extremely successful, especially during COVID-19. We have 120,000 people in the province who have signed up for an account. Right now you can renew your vehicle online; you can renew your MCP card online. There are some rudimentary services that you can do. We are continually going to be adding more and more services, and the idea is that those will replace getting something in the mail. Instead of getting a reminder in the mail that your driver's licence has expired, you'll get an email notification.

We're hoping to make things easier for people and we always hear that it was easier than people expected, which is great.

In the next few weeks, we're launching some new services. The first one is allowing people in the province to renew MCPs for their dependants. If you have a child and their MCP card expires in a few weeks' time or next month, when we launch it in a few weeks, you'll be able to go online and renew the MCP card for a dependant, which is great.

We're also working on online permit tests. When you do your written test for your driving permit, you go in and you write a test now. That will be available online because during COVID

the availability of those tests has been significantly reduced. We're very excited to be offering those online, which will reduce the number of people walking into our branches across the province, will improve accessibility and availability. They will still be able to come in, but hopefully many people will choose to take those tests online.

The third thing we are working on right now is woodcutting permits. Residents of the province will be able to apply for those online. Hopefully, that will help alleviate some frustration for people.

Mr. Speaker, just circling back on a few other of the government programs related to digital and technology that I'm very excited about, and going back to my parliamentary secretary for the former Department of TCII, which I think will be hugely beneficial to the people and businesses of the province: the \$17 million invested in research and development for commercialization, which will be hugely important; the \$6 million for the Innovation and Business Development Fund, which I'm very excited about; and one program in particular, the \$2.7 million for the Business Tech Solutions Program that NATI is delivering.

I know many businesses around the province struggle with how do they operate an online store. How do they move to having a better online ordering system or use technology to make their businesses more efficient? That's exactly what this program is designed for.

Maybe there's a restaurant and they want to look at offering online orders, or a store that wants to potentially ship their products globally. Maybe they have a lot of handicraft goods or artisan crafts made here in the province and they want to be able to ship those around the world, but they're not sure how do you operate an online store. It must be really scary. That program that NATI is going to be delivering is designed specifically for those types of businesses, small businesses who need extra help and support, either by getting an online store or by potentially getting someone to help them put in an online store. I think that'll have a huge impact for people all across the province.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, I'm very excited about the budget. I think it's going to have a huge impact for constituents in my District of Mount Scio. I'm looking forward to the next budget as we prepare for that as well in my new role and capacity. I'm very optimistic. I'm very excited about the future of the province. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues on the Premier's team as we work towards our next budget and try to make things even better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I thank the hon. minister and the Member for Mount Scio on her remarks. Glad that she got her budget speech in because we're not certain if she's going to be back here with us next week. She may be busy next week; she may have another engagement. We certainly wish her well, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: She's been a real trooper.

Mr. Speaker, with that being said, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until Monday, 1:30 in the afternoon.

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