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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Are the House Leaders ready?

Government House Leader ready?

Opposition House Leader ready?

Third Party ready?

Admit strangers.

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

Yesterday during debate the Member for Conception Bay South remarked that I was laughing over there like a schoolgirl. Mr. Speaker, we have certain protections within this House referred to as parliamentary privilege. One of those privileges – and I will quote from the *Members' Parliamentary Guide* – is “Freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation, and molestation in carrying out his or her legislative duties”

The remark made by the Member for Conception Bay South was intimidating, sexist, misogynistic and it has no place in the most tenuous and heated debates, and certainly no place in this hon. House. Mr. Speaker, using the term “schoolgirl” with the intent to belittle, condescend and scold was wrong and it was a breach of privilege. I wonder has a male Member of this House ever been admonished to acting like a schoolboy.

Our role as Members of the House of Assembly is important. Together, we represent the people of this province in passing laws that govern our lives.

Language matters, Mr. Speaker. It is how we express ourselves and our belief systems. The words we choose impact our attitudes, actions and behavior towards women. As Members of the House of Assembly who represent the women and girls of Newfoundland and Labrador, it is incumbent upon us that we elevate and empower their voices, not belittle

them; that we lead with our words and actions; that we acknowledge that gender inequity and gender-based violence are directly tied to how we talk about, treat and value women. And sadly it is all too often normalized and unchallenged. I rise today to challenge it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: I am one of the longest serving members of this House, Mr. Speaker. I am a Cabinet minister and I have worked so hard to get here. Along my journey, my accomplishments have been reduced to being, and I quote, just a pretty face or a schoolgirl. I would venture to guess the women in this room share with me similar experiences enduring the brunt of sexist remarks, rhetoric and noise.

Ironically, I will be presenting a Ministerial Statement today observing October 11 as International Day of the Girl, a day that recognizes girls' rights and the unique challenges they face around the world, a day in which I am asking all Members of the House to celebrate girls as leaders and encourage them to find their voice and take their seat at the table. It is so important, Mr. Speaker, that I challenge the Member opposite's comment as one that runs so contrary to the spirit of this observance.

And I will take this opportunity to say wholeheartedly that some of our greatest promise for the future of this provinces lies within our schoolgirls.

Disrespectful and sexist remarks come at a harmful cost, not only on me but my fellow women colleagues, the women that work around me; on the integrity, Mr. Speaker, of the office I proudly serve, an office whose sole purpose is to advance the status of women and to the many women and girls watching today and who aspire to sit in our seats.

I call on the Member for Conception Bay South to stand in this House, withdraw his remark and apologize and reflect on how insidious gender inequality is and his role to help end it.

I leave you all today with some questions that we all need to ask ourselves. What is the message we are sending when we undermine and belittle the strength, value and worth of

women and girls through the use of sexist comments? By challenging sexism, what are we teaching our daughters? By speaking up today, what am I teaching my daughter about her value, her worth and her status in this House and in this province? By acknowledging that what was said to me is harmful and wrong, what are we teaching each other?

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that this can be a teachable moment for all of us today. Let us take this opportunity to do better for all girls and women who are working hard toward their goals, who are leading in our communities and who are ensuring this province has a bright and better future.

I move, Mr. Speaker, seconded by the Member for St. John's West, that this House consider the violation of my privileges as a Member by the disrespectful and sexist remarks by the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. SPEAKER: I'm going to open the floor for comments from other Members before I comment on this.

We'll go to the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I offer up any apologies or whatnot – I did apologize yesterday in the House – I would be remiss and I probably wouldn't be the husband, the father or the son I am without clarifying something for the general public, whoever may be watching. My commentary yesterday was during heated debate. There were actions on the other side and I'll leave that where they're to. It's during the cut and thrust of debate with lots of things being said back and forth. In that moment, with a lot of heckling going on, I did make that comment. It was no way intended to be the way it's been portrayed. That's very unfortunate, but it is – and I'm not saying how people react, because it's said your words sometimes come out of your mouth but the receiver doesn't always take them the way you mean them. So for that part, there's no problem there.

My integrity and, me as a person, who I am – and you can go in through CBS and you can ask

anyone in CBS, because I've lived 54 years of my life in CBS. I don't get elected because I'm a Tory – and most people on that side of the House can attest to that. In 2015, I should have never gotten elected. I got elected because people believe in me and what I do, and a lot of that is based on my integrity.

So I do feel here, if I don't say what I say, I'd be abandoning my duties as a husband, a father and a son. I have two beautiful daughters, when they were in younger years – I wish they were still young; they're grown up now. I have two daughters and I'm very proud to say I'm a good father. They could come in here and I'm sure they could attest to that. I know every father could say that, but I'll put my credibility against anyone's. I'm a devoted father and, my wife might not always agree, but I think I'm a pretty good husband as well. My mother, I talk to her everyday. She just called me at lunchtime.

Sometimes we misspeak, but I don't want this to turn into some kind of a back and forth, that I'm this horrible person and that I condemn women. I respect women. I have women that are in our caucus and in our staff, and I think you could feel free to ask them without any coaching from me.

It's unfortunate, sometimes in this House we all say things we may or may not feel bad about. I'll be the first to say, I went home last night and listened to that, because that was one of those things and you're – I get going and sometimes I'll blurb something out and I'll say I'll have to go back and watch it that night and say, what did I say, and make sure it wasn't anything too wrong.

We're all human. I'm sure a lot of people in this House do that. That's fair play, and I make mistakes all the time. As I always say, in a house full of women I'm always wrong, but I'm good with that in my house. I'm very proud to say that, and I have a very happy home. So I think it's very important to highlight that, me as a person, because I do feel to a point of some of the commentary there that I feel like I'm somewhat under – my integrity has been taken out of place because I made an inappropriate comment.

Sometimes me and the hon. Government House Leader have many heated debates in this House too, and I'm sure some of the comments said back and forth – I know I've said some sometimes and I've probably called him aside after and said, you know – I do, I apologize because I don't mean it, but you're caught up in the moment.

So taking all that into account then – as recently as lunch hour, actually, I had an email from a constituent of mine and she expressed her displeasure in my commentary. I responded to her and I acknowledged, that's fair game. I explained to her what was going on, because there was more than what you see on camera: but, that being said, I understood where she was coming from. I explained to her the same sort of thing I'm saying now, that I didn't mean any harm, and I apologized to her, too.

Life is about mistakes. Sometimes we misspeak; a lot of times we misspeak. That's the nature of the beast. None of us are perfect. Obviously, I misspoke. In no way – and I mean in no way – did I intend to cause any harm or cause any grief to the Deputy House Leader. I do feel very sad that she feels that way, and I am very sorry. I could have stood up and just said I'm sorry and sat down, which some people have done in the past, but that wouldn't be fair either. So I do offer my sincere apologies. It's not who I am. I got caught up debate.

I'm not saying that I'll never apologize again, because who knows. That's the nature of the beast we live in this House, but I do feel very unfortunate that she feels that way. I do withdraw my remarks and I apologize unequivocally. I just want people out there to know that contrary to what you may think, this is a heated room sometimes, but as a father, a husband and a son, I'm proud to have them in my life and I do a good job of it; I try to anyway. I do apologize for anything disparaging that I may have said to the Deputy House Leader.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to have a few words on this very disappointing matter, I will say that. Having been involved in business and in politics for quite some time, Mr. Speaker, I feel truly aggrieved that this has occurred but I do think that we can't continue to move past it. We can't continue to accept it.

I did hear the Member opposite make his apology. I also heard him say, I think the quote was: in a house full of women I'm always wrong. Which I don't understand how that – I'm concerned about how it can be misconstrued.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this, we can't minimize this. I hear and acknowledge the Member opposite's comment but let's reflect upon what this language actually does do. It basically says that the minister – I'm going to say that again – is childlike. A child cannot be trusted with major decisions around finances, cannot be tasked with complex and meaningful work and cannot really expect them to be self-sufficient or engaged in matters that are of importance and be entirely responsible. I want all of us to reflect on this.

I accept the Member opposite said he was sincere in his apology, but I think we all need to reflect on our language that we use in this House. We have to reflect on our leadership. The language is denigrating, it's disrespectful, it's disparaging, it's misogynistic, it's paternalistic, it's patronizing and, Mr. Speaker, we all seem to hear it quite a bit. I can tell you as a female, as a woman who's been very engaged in the highest levels of business, very engaged in the highest levels of politics, both federally and provincially, I hear it all the time and it must stop.

I plead to not just the Member opposite who feels his comment was misconstrued or caught up in debate – he needs to reflect, as do we all need to reflect, on the power of the language. That's what the Member asked for. The minister clearly said what she wants and what she asked for was not just an apology – you know my language was misconstrued – but that we reflect on our language, that we reflect on our sense.

Even yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in the thrust of debate my personal health information was raised on the floor here. First of all, I'm going to say there were other Members in this House that

were in that community at the same time I was, but my personal information and my health information came to this floor. We have to understand, we have to reflect and we have to realize that this type of misogynistic, paternalistic behaviour is not acceptable.

We want more women in this House, we want more women to contribute and it's time that we all recognize the language that we must use to ensure inclusiveness, to ensure that we are being respectful. I plead with all of us, accepting that the Member opposite recognizes that he erred yesterday and said he did not intend to cause harm, but the language is not – we just can't move past it anymore, Mr. Speaker, and just accept this was not meant to be harmful. It is harmful and we all must recognize it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torn gat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's kind of hard to put this all into perspective. There's a lot at stake right now. A gentleman's reputation is actually at stake, I think, just because of what's going on here. Also, somebody was offended and deeply hurt. I could tell it by my fellow MHA's voice. When she was speaking, her voice quivered and she was honestly hurt to be compared to a schoolgirl. My fellow MHA, he did apologize.

I think we have to find balance here, because as the deputy prime minister, Deputy Premier – just getting the words right – it's an emotional time for all of us. She said it's important. Gender here is very, very important. When we look around and we see less than 52 per cent of the Members here are women. That's the actual make-up of the general population, so we have to be careful.

When I introduced myself to the House of Assembly, I talked about my role and where I came from. I spent 20 years in construction, mining, exploration, all non-traditional jobs. I have friends who've told me stories about being sexually assaulted, brutally raped. I've actually been at meetings where people hit the desk and

cursed and swore, and that was an everyday occurrence. I've seen and I witnessed a lot. I know when women actually enter the workplace, one of the positive things that comes out of that is the decorum actually gets better. The male counterparts actually have told me they appreciate that.

We have to be very, very careful, too. Myself, as a woman, I have to be careful not to undermine the advances that have been done by women. So I choose my words really carefully right here, right now, when I say that my fellow MHA was talking on a very sensitive subject where people were losing their jobs; families were losing their jobs.

I remember when we had a major hit to our economy where people actually took their own lives. Families right now, because of Come By Chance and the offshore and the loss of jobs in COVID, there are a lot of people out there who may be contemplating suicide. I've lost people, so I need to choose my words really carefully.

Yesterday was a heated time in the House of Assembly, but one thing I want to say, when my fellow MHA looked across and saw an MHA laughing, her gender was female, and he was hurt and upset and offended. He was mad, and he referred to her as behaving like a schoolgirl. Now, I'm not dismissing it. I'm not. I have to look at myself and say if I would have saw, say, for example, the Minister of Transportation or some other person over across the floor laughing, would I have referred to them as behaving like a schoolboy? We have to be careful with our language. We have to be careful when we're dealing with gender, because we have to make sure that we don't undermine gender.

Also, we have to look at the intent of the words. I have to tell you that is the only way I survived in my former profession. I think I told the House about an old engineer that used to get out of the truck and run around to the other side and open the door for me. When I was getting abroad the pickup truck, if I was getting in the back, in the pan as we called it, he would be there and he would run over and try and help me.

I actually spoke to women that were going into non-traditional trades, and I told them – and I

think I told the House this – they were there and they were wondering: What did I say to that man who was running around doing that? Because as a woman you would be offended to say: Well, I could do as much; I'm as strong, I'm as fast, I'm as quick. In actual fact, I was all that and more. He was an older man; I could run circles around him. I could dead lift more than he could. I was in the prime of my life.

Do you know what I said to him, and I think I've told you? I would say: Thank you, thank you. Because his intention was to make sure that I didn't get hurt. That was the way he was raised, as a gentleman. This gentleman was to help women. And you know something, if I would have said something disrespectful back and showed that I was offended, I would have lost that supporter that I badly needed at that time in my life.

I have to say, we have to be very, very careful because we need allies as women. We have to look at the intention, and was there any malice or any way that my fellow MHA was trying to undermine the MHA because of her gender? I don't think so. We have to be careful, and as MHAs we have to have balance. We really, really do. It's very, very important, because if we start that then we could actually hurt our cause I think.

I'm going to end on that note.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I think I've heard from enough people on this motion.

I will take this matter under advisement. I'm not going to rule right now. I want to take it into account that usually when a Member apologizes and withdraws his comments that the matter is over, but I'm going to leave this until I return on Monday to make my final ruling on this matter. I want to review some of the transcripts and look at this a little bit further and think about what Members have said here on this point of privilege.

I thank everyone for their comments.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Lake Melville, Stephenville - Port au Port, Mount Pearl North, Labrador West, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Operating a golf club in Central Labrador, an area described as having 10 months of winter and two months of bad skidooing, can be challenging.

In these times of a worldwide pandemic, you have to wonder if you could ever survive. However, 49 years after Ernie Funston led a group of volunteers to clear several fairways out of the wilderness, the Amaruk Golf & Sports Club is doing just fine.

Following the declaration of the public health emergency in March, businesses, organizations, volunteers and others contributed their time, money and know-how to improve the golfing experience. The reinvigorated community facility, along with its physically-distance spaces, resulted in a 125 per cent increase in golfers at this member owned and operated facility during 2020.

Despite unprecedented challenges, the new executive completed extensive renovations to the clubhouse. They turned fairways into works of art under the supervision of key greens staff Colin Jacobs and James Saunders, and they reactivated the junior golf program to provide quality instruction for 28 youth in the community.

I would ask this hon. House of Assembly to congratulate the Amaruk Golf & Sports Club as they prepare to celebrate 50 years of successful operation in 2021.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the week of October 4 to October 10 is being recognized as Fire Prevention Week 2020 in Newfoundland and Labrador, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge, recognize and thank the men and women who provide the District of Stephenville - Port au Port with these emergency services. There are currently five fire departments in our district which cover approximately 925 square kilometres and serve some 6,000 households.

The Stephenville department consists of 10 full-time and 13 volunteer firefighters, while the Town of Kippens currently has 16 active volunteer firefighters servicing their area. The Port au Port Regional Volunteer Fire Department has 26 active volunteer firefighters and covers Point au Mal through Port au Port East and West, to Boswarlos and on to Front Road, ending in Felix Cove. The Cape St. George department has a group of 17 volunteer firefighters that cover the communities in their area. The Town of Lourdes has 37 volunteer firefighters that cover from Piccadilly to Mainland, including Black Duck Brook.

The dedication of these volunteers deserves our thanks and appreciation for their tireless efforts in helping to keep us safe. Thank you for all your service to our district.

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.

The Mount Pearl Community Supper Group consists of private, municipal and ministerial organizations in Mount Pearl who hold community suppers twice a month aimed at providing hot meals to those interested. However, during COVID-19 the group could no longer hold its sit-down suppers and quickly realized they would need to change how they administered their help to the community.

With the realization that all food donated had to be disinfected and left for three days before

being used, it was decided that financial aid would be the best donation, so they began a vigorous fundraising campaign. As of June 12 the fundraiser had received roughly \$12,000 through various donations, including a GoFundMe campaign and a \$5,000 donation from the City of Mount Pearl.

Please join me in thanking the Mount Pearl Community Supper Group and all those who donated or helped during the Mount Pearl food banks during the COVID pandemic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge Gateway Labrador for hosting the fourth annual Fall Heritage Fair in Labrador West. It is a celebration of art, culture, heritage and the abundance of local talent that we have in Labrador West. The board members and staff at Gateway Labrador strive to continue growing this event year over year and it has quickly become something we look forward to as summer comes to an end.

This year posed many challenges, but Gateway Labrador pushed forward with planning and worked hard to develop a schedule full of virtual and in-person events with strict guidelines adhered to. This year was comprised of virtual storytelling, art demonstrations, live music every night, virtually, and always the popular farmers' market, hosted by the community gardens. Labrador West has seen the need for a cultural fall event where the community comes together, and this year brought people near and far back home after a very busy summer season.

I encourage all Members in this hon. House to join me in thanking Gateway Labrador and everyone involved for making the fourth annual Fall Heritage Fair a success and giving Labrador West a platform to showcase our amazing culture.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi is the proud home of many fabulous locally owned and operated restaurants. Few have stood the test of time quite like the Big R on Harvey Road. Renowned for its fish and chips and homestyle comfort food, the Big R has been a feature in my district for over 60 years.

Karen Lambert and her family have owned and operated the business since 1960 when it was opened by her uncle. Karen's family is not the only one who has fond memories. All you need to do is bring up the restaurant's closing and folks will begin to wax poetic about the delicious meals and top-notch staff. The Big R was loved.

The business was lost in the Harvey Road fire in 1992, but it wasn't long before it was back, bringing us almost three more decades of fantastic foods. I will note there is a location still on Blackmarsh Road, but I know in my district we will miss the Big R on Harvey Road, while wishing Karen and her staff a great next chapter.

I ask all the hon. Members in this House to join me in celebrating the Big R, its owners and staff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, October 11 is International Day of the Girl. When this day was first recognized, there was an oath we were asked to take. In part it stated: We celebrate because girls are leaders; girls make a difference; and girls' rights matter. Those words are as significant today as they were eight years ago.

With this year's theme of "My Voice, Our Equal Future" in mind, girls from all walks of life are

working together to boldly demand action against discrimination, violence and lesser learning opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I want our girls to know that we are listening and we hear their call. Our government supports girls in our province and we are dedicated to ensuring their social and economic safety and wellbeing. I encourage all girls in Newfoundland and Labrador to find your voice, tell your story, be who you are and take your seat at the table.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in pledging to support, mentor and sponsor girls dreams and ambitions at every opportunity. Let us work to empower our girls and ensure a bright future for them all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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

On behalf of the Official Opposition, it is my honour to recognize October 11 as International Day of the Girl.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all girls in our province to follow their dreams, create opportunities and seize their future. It is also equally important to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the many organizations, the many volunteers in our communities which provide invaluable support and inspiration to girls and young women. Organizations such as Girl Guides and Big Brother Big Sisters provide role models and empower our girls.

Together, let us all work together to empower girls in our families and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Mr. Speaker, it's great to be a girl. We are smart, vibrant, capable and can do anything boys can do, sometimes better.

As elected officials we lead by good example with things like gender-balanced Cabinets. Girls' lives in this province will improve when Gender-based Analysis Plus becomes a routine part of policy development. Girls empower and support one another.

I stand in this Chamber because of the sage advice of my mother, which all girls need to hear: There is nothing that you can't do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, during a recent visit to the West Coast, I had the opportunity to tour the new state-of-the-art provincial wildlife laboratory situated in Pasadena. The lab will improve how provincial wildlife biologists conduct population studies and research.

Mr. Speaker, my thanks to biologist Shane Hann and ecologist Don Keefe for demonstrating how the wildlife lab allows them to catalogue, process and analyze submitted specimens in a more timely and efficient manner to support important studies such as recently relaunched Big Game Jawbone Collection Program and the Canid Lineage Project.

The wildlife lab also provides additional services critical to the sustainable management of our valuable wildlife resources, including wildlife disease surveillance, DNA collection and mortality investigations. Data collected is already being used in research that supports the health of wildlife populations, including the pine marten, eagles, small mammals and various inland fish species.

Mr. Speaker, the lab has equipment that provides for a safe and sanitary working environment and is strategically located to take advantage of other department supports available at adjacent wildlife and forestry management offices and nearby Animal Health Division offices.

Healthy outdoor and wildlife resources are essential to our culture, heritage and recreational pursuits. The opening of this wildlife laboratory will assist in our sustainable management efforts on behalf of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We are pleased to recognize the opening of the new provincial wildlife laboratory. We certainly welcome any initiative that will support and inform sustainable management of our wildlife resources. Wildlife research is very important and I understand that the new lab offers the necessary tools and equipment to better monitor and protect the province's wild game populations.

Mr. Speaker, we are particularly pleased that two of the key programs to be supported at the facility are the Canid Lineage Project and recently reinstated Big Game Jawbone Collection Program, which we lobbied for. As I have said before, analyzing the specimens collected through such studies provides valuable insight into the health of our wildlife populations, which are so critical and important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the work being done to support our wildlife resources and we look forward to being updated on the various research projects being carried out at the new laboratory.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 an advance copy of his statement.

I commend the government for investing in a new provincial wildlife laboratory. It is said that we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. This new laboratory is as much an investment in our children and future generations as it is in scientific research. It's about stewardship of our planet, our home. Stewardship must also guide government in developing its protected areas plan and providing a home for nature and for wildlife.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Newfoundland and Labrador has the largest ocean economy in Canada and we are capitalizing on this to generate economic growth. We have outstanding education and research facilities and an impressive cluster of companies to support the growing ocean industry in Canada and around the world. Today, I want to give you a few examples of the leading, cutting-edge companies that are proud to call Newfoundland and Labrador home. These companies are making their mark not just locally, but around the globe.

Genoa Design International has been in business for 25 years and provides production design and 3D modelling services to shipbuilding and offshore industries. Most recently, they entered into a teaming agreement with Seaspan Shipyards to create Canada's future Polar Icebreaker, which is extremely exciting news.

Kraken Robotics, headquartered in St. John's, with offices in Halifax, Toronto, Boston and Germany is a world leader in advanced sensor technology and underwater robotics for

unmanned maritime defence and commercial vehicles. Just recently, Kraken announced two contracts with the Danish and Polish NATO Navies.

SubC Imaging, headquartered in Clarenville with clients in over 30 countries, creates technologically advanced and intelligent video equipment for the offshore and subsea markets. Their products have been deployed in the offshore oil and gas sector, deep-sea mining activity, archaeological work and marine research.

These companies are just the tip of the iceberg and we are proud to support and be a part of the collective efforts of all partners in our ocean economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

There's no doubt, when given the opportunity Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are able to compete on a world stage. Our ocean technology companies are excellent examples of this. Companies such as Genoa Design – I know these people quite well – International and Kraken Robotics and SubC Imaging are a testament to the success which companies in this province can have. However, I believe that our province has more potential in this area. This is a sector which can be nurtured and grown. I call upon the minister to work with industry and remove barriers to their growth, support start-ups and create jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you very much.

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 his statement.

I, 100 per cent, agree with the minister. We are a world-class leader in ocean technology, and this dates back to the hundreds of years of people from this province being on and making a living from the sea. These companies have taken all this knowledge and continue to make more breakthroughs in this sector. We cannot look at just the tip; we need to make key investments in the whole iceberg.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Would the government provide an update to the House on the status of the Husky layoffs and the status of Husky's plans for the 60 per cent completed West White Rose structure?

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

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

As the Member referenced, Husky did make a difficult announcement in the last couple of days as it relates to their workforce, as it relates to their business plan. What I can say is a few weeks back they did announce a review of their operations. That review is ongoing and we have not been apprised of any developments on their end.

What I can say is that we continue to work with them on their projects here in this province. In fact, our staff will be speaking with them this afternoon. We've advised that we will continue

to do what we can to help them in this difficult environment and we're prepared to do, as I say, everything we can.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Two weeks ago the Premier said help is here and this is just the beginning; however, help is not here for those who work on West White Rose.

When was the last time the minister spoke to Ottawa? Workers are asking for an update.

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

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

What I can say is, in fact, I was speaking with the federal government last night and, in fact, our staff were speaking with them yesterday and today.

Ottawa, as we all know, did come with \$320 million just very recently which we'll be working to deploy out there in the industry the best way we can. In fact, we had an oil and gas council meeting this morning with multiple people in the industry who have experience and, more importantly, beyond the experience, have a desire to take this worldwide issue that we're facing. They realize they have the experience. So we're going to work with them and listen to their advice on how we best deploy that money and take other steps to help this beleaguered industry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Canadian statesmen have referred to the amount the minister refers to as a smaller amount.

This is for the Minister of Health. When the government changed the rules around self-isolation for returning rotational workers after pressure from the PC Opposition and the workers themselves, a further relaxation of the rules for these workers would be reviewed after a trial period of 28 days. This expired yesterday. There have been many complaints about mental health effects, especially from workers on short rotations.

What further relaxation to the testing regime will be issued?

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

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

The Member opposite may also recall that we said there would be a period of about a week of evaluation after this pilot scheme closed. That will take us to the end of next week.

Currently, there will be no changes to the requirements for rotational workers, with the exception of those where outbreaks are ongoing. If the situation changes in those areas we may have to revisit that before the end of the evaluation period, but I would be happy to report back at the end of the evaluation period.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In media reports today the minister is quoted as saying: There are other interested parties kicking the tires on the refinery.

Can the minister specifically explain that and update this House on who he has been speaking with?

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

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

Just to correct the record, because when I'm quoted I like to be quoted accurately, I don't think I actually said the words "kicking the tires." That might be used in some way to diminish the interest that's been expressed.

One thing that I can say publicly is that Origin, a company which is based in the United States, which has previously expressed interest, has reached out to again express their interest in this. They were surprised, like everybody, when the deal collapsed, but they've come forward. In fact, we've been speaking to them yesterday, we've been speaking to them today and I'll be speaking to them myself later on today as well.

So, again, there is a cautious optimism there. We'll continue to do what we can to help the parties involved in this to see what kind of deal they can come to. There has been other interest expressed, but at the request of the companies, they still don't want to put their names out there yet, but they're expressing their interest.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, entire communities are on edge and families are fearing for their futures. The people of the province deserve to know who the minister is alluding to and what the status of the talks is at least.

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

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

I think I just indicated very clearly that Origin is a company; they can be looked up online. The Premier has met with them, I believe the previous minister did and I have had conversations with them as well. They have begun their due diligence. We'll be speaking

with them later today and that's basically all we can say at this point.

The second company – I am not going to possibly place interest in this project at risk because the Member asked. The company that has indicated an interest has said they would prefer to remain unnamed. I will not ruin a possible deal just to satisfy the Member's question here in the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main,

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, this is not about satisfying my curiosity; this is about offering some hope to the anxious families and communities that are out there.

Surely, some general information can be provided to help them.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, what I can say from my perspective, when it comes to the latter of the companies I've mentioned, they were very clear and unequivocal. They said they would prefer their interest not to be made public at this time. The reality is that I would love to come out and say absolutely everything, but then I would be getting blamed for ruining a possible deal. As it relates to the first interested party, I have given all the information that I can.

What I can say is that I also spoke to the union this morning again and we had an excellent conversation where they had the same concerns. They're dealing first-hand with these individuals that are affected. They thanked us for our energy on this file, for our attention to this. They realize the implications here, the confidentiality and what we've promised, that we will keep in touch with them because we have the same interests in mind.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister provide the terms of reference for the Oil and Gas Industry Recovery Task Force?

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

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

I do not have a finalized copy here. That was actually discussed on a Skype call with the members this morning, between the co-chairs and the rest of the members. What I can say is that they will be forthcoming soon and they will be provided to the public once they've been decided by the co-chairs and other members.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The money which the federal government is providing is not nearly enough, Minister.

Can you provide a list of the members of this task force?

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

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

I guess there are two parts to this. As it relates to the task force, I've indicated that the co-chairs are Karen Veitch Winsor and Bill Fanning, two people that are also on the oil and gas council and, I would note, are experts in this industry, well known and well respected in this industry. As I've indicated on every call, I trust in their knowledge and experience far more than I do my own, being very new to this file. We're

going to defer to the experts here and that will help guide us in our decisions.

As it relates to the rest of the composition, they will be tasked with that. What I can say is I trust these individuals who have the best interests of this industry in mind. I trust them with their decision. We will be there to help and to guide and we'll work with them in a very expedient manner.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know, Minister, you're not going to disclose but I think it's worthy of putting this out there. The task force was announced two weeks ago. The terms of reference are not available; the list of members is incomplete. Trades NL represent 18,000 tradespeople in this province, tradespeople who desperately need jobs.

Will Trades NL have a seat on this task force?

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

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

Some of the preamble, again, I would take it as being belittling to the members who are taking their time putting into these for the interests of this province. I'm not going to do anything to criticize them.

What I can say is I spoke to Darin King yesterday with Trades NL. We had a good conversation and we agreed to follow up. I realize the importance of the group that he represents and someone that I have a history with here in this very House of Assembly.

What I can say is when it comes to the composition it will be left to the co-chairs because I trust their experience. But, again, I think everybody realizes the importance of Trades NL when it relates to these projects and to the health of our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the budget of a couple of weeks ago announced a \$25-million fund for small businesses. We as an Opposition had been lobbying for additional supports. We're glad to see that, as were many small businesses I'm sure, but so far we haven't seen any details.

I ask the minister: When will the details of the program be released?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the Member and I'm glad that they lobbied to do it, but it was this government that will deliver on that promise. The same as with \$25-a-day child care, I say to the Member for Bonavista.

What I will say is that we're very happy to put a much-needed \$30 million into this. The details are extremely close to being worked out.

One of the issues that we do deal with is given the fact that this applies to literally thousands of possible opportunities here, we're working with OCIO to do the finishing touches on an online portal system so that businesses, no matter where they are in this province, will have online quick access to these funds. That will be coming in the very near future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear the minister's acknowledgement of our contribution, and I'm sure that he recognizes as well as I do that more and more jobs are being lost every day. Again, as the Minister of Finance

well knows as a former businesswoman herself, businesses are the job creators. They are struggling and they need help.

Who will be eligible to avail of the funding and, again, what are the criteria?

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

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

There's no doubt that anybody can recognize the difficulties being felt by this province and others. In fact, I heard today that the unemployment rate in Calgary is actually higher than it is in here in this province, which is a startling fact. The reality is that it applies to the offshore industry right down to one of the backbones, which is small business.

We've come out and done what we can during these difficult times over the period of COVID. We've had \$30 million in a Residential Construction Rebate; \$25 million into the tourism industry; \$10 million in the utility credits; tax payment extensions; and, right now, we've had the announcement on \$30 million.

I guess the criteria will be coming out very soon, but we need to ensure that online portal is completed so that there are no glitches in accessing and being able to apply for this much needed funding.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. I would only ask: Does very soon mean next week, next month?

As we know, businesses are desperate for funding, and I could quote *Jerry Maguire* and say: Show me the money.

Thank you.

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

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

I emphasize with the Member opposite. I can remember being on that side asking questions, and if you were talking about *Family Feud*, the number-one answer was: Soon.

I realize that soon is never soon enough, but what I can say is, look, we realize the struggles that these small businesses all over this province are going through. We realize that they need this access. I'm very happy that the Finance Minister, as well as Cabinet and the Premier, were able to come up with this funding. We are trying to get it out and ready soon, but we want to make sure that everything is done right so that we don't have bigger issues and glitches with an unfinished system.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm hearing from constituents who have applied for the home renovation program but have yet to receive an answer.

I ask the minister: What update can the House provide to these individuals?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, a very important question.

We were very pleased to have a construction rebate program. It was very well prescribed; I think it was close on 12,000 applications. As you know, that closed in early August, Mr. Speaker. We've been working with our partner in that, the Home Builders' Association, working through the applications. Of course, all applications went to the Home Builders' Association for review. We've put an extra team of people on this.

So anyone who is still outstanding, if they haven't received anything yet, it will only be a

matter of a very short period of time to hear the results, because of just the backlog, the volume of people. That's one of the reasons why I actually extended the end date of the program to June.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, I have constituents who applied before the deadline, but made honest mistakes in completing their paperwork. They're now being told they cannot appeal or reapply. These people should've qualified.

Will the minister put in place an appeals process?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This program, as the Member opposite alluded to, was very heavily oversubscribed, actually, and there were strict criteria that were put in place. The review was done by the Home Builders' Association. A lot of people have been working through the backlog of applicants, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that if it was a genuine error they could make a call, but there is a process they have to go through in order to have access to this money. I'll certainly take it under advisement if there's something else that we could be doing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This government is one that continues to leave people in waiting. People are waiting to go back to work. Small businesses are waiting for support. The oil industry is also waiting. And now people are waiting for their renovation rebates.

I ask the House: Is the minister confirming that individuals who are at home waiting but have yet to receive approval will not be funded?

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

MS. COADY: I take umbrage to the preamble to that question, Mr. Speaker. We have been very active as a government. Immediately when we understood there was COVID, we put in a COVID relief fund. We've put in a COVID relief fund for the Home Builders' Association; we've now announced one for business and small business in particular. We've announced one for tourism operators. We've helped with workers, especially workers that are on the minimum wage. We have done so much as a government to support people and we will continue to do so.

To answer the question that the Member just asked: We are working through the backlog that we have. We had 12,000 applications for this program, Mr. Speaker, well beyond what anyone imagined. It's great for the industry; it's great for home builders, and we're going to do everything that we can.

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, Route 60 through Topsail is riddled with potholes, shoulder erosion and deteriorating storm drains. The previous minister of Transportation and Works gave assurances that these areas would be addressed this year.

I ask the current minister responsible: Will he give the same assurance?

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

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

The Member opposite should be happy to know – I guess he already knows – this year on the Foxtrap Access Road we spent \$1.2 million; Route 60, we spent \$1 million. We have an active group of maintenance from our depots, ongoing maintenance. I'm hearing there are some subterranean issues in that area that have yet to be decided. There are some underground issues that had to be dealt with. The Member is probably sure of that by talking to the depot.

Any time after the House is over he wanted to have a sidebar meeting, no problem. My door is open to you, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm taking that as there's no assurance as per the previous Transportation minister?

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

MR. BRAGG: Luckily, Mr. Speaker, a little bird whispered in my ear. A lot of the issues right there, right now are municipal infrastructure issues. Luckily, this government has a great view and the insight to put both of our departments together right now. I'm the minister of municipal infrastructure as well as provincial infrastructure so in the future, on a go-forward basis, we'll look at what infrastructure is in the ground before we would do the infrastructure above ground.

A good example of that, Mr. Speaker, would be it would be pointless to pave a road and next year come back and tear it up and put in laterals for water and sewer services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some health care workers that are brought in to Central Health from outside the Atlantic bubble self-isolate for 14 days before they go to work.

I ask the minister: Is there a double standard between Labrador-Grenfell Health and Central Health?

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

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

The decision as to whether or not self-isolation can be provided beforehand depends on the operational requirements of the regional health authority. The individuals that I'm aware of in Central Health who were able to self-isolate from home were actually working from home because of the nature of their clinical work could be done online. There is no double standard, Mr. Speaker; it's one standard for all based on public health guidelines and requirements.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When he was asked why locums are not required to self-isolate in Labrador, the minister said it's the two weeks they can't commit because that's their working time.

I ask the minister: Will he be able to table a breakdown of how many health care workers were asked if they could self-isolate and their response?

Thank you.

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

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

The issue around self-isolation that the Member opposite refers to was in response to a question

about whether or not the problem with locums in Labrador was money. My answer to that was, no, it was time. The people who come to work have a limited period of time during which they can provide service. If they spend two weeks in a building somewhere self-isolating and cannot provide service and then have to go home, neither the locum nor the regional health authority benefits from that.

The answer that she quotes, the statement I made, was taken out of context, Mr. Speaker, and refers to a slightly different accent on the same issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What is the situation with propane in the province and, specifically, how much propane is left at the refinery?

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

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

While we have not been told by NARL, or North Atlantic, how much propane is there, what I can say is they told me even prior to this happening that the importation of propane had already started. So the supply is not something that's in jeopardy. We haven't had any concerns in the short term expressed to us when it comes to fuel supply, but it's obviously something that we're cognizant of.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, I can tell him how much is left: none.

What is the plan to get propane to the province?

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

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

As I indicated in the previous question, North Atlantic had indicated that some weeks ago they had already begun the importation of propane into this province via Marine Atlantic. So the supply is not an issue and, certainly, I don't think there's any immediate fear that should be felt by citizens out there as it relates to supply.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the minister that the refinery was processing 135,000 barrels a day just to keep up with the supply here in Newfoundland, so to expect it to be trucked in is ludicrous.

I spoke to a new business operator who's concerned that the shortage of propane will drive the price up. He had a specific question for me; he asked if I thought he should switch from propane to electric in order to be able to afford to move on.

I ask the minister: How would he respond?

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

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

What I would say is that I would be interested in hearing from any constituent that is facing concerns. My email is there, it's pretty easy to get, and I would have no problem responding to your constituent or any constituent directly.

The biggest thing that I would tell him, though, is I understand what they're going through, but certainly now is not the time for fear or panic. Our interest and our attention is being paid to coming up with a solution.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, since 2017, this Liberal government has promised to expand the Family Violence Intervention Court into Labrador and Central Newfoundland. Four years later, this still isn't done.

Can the minister explain why residents of Central Newfoundland and Labrador and in Labrador are not able to avail of this court service?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

I want to congratulate the Member who was in Justice before me on the great work that he did when it comes to the Family Intervention Court and when it comes to other courts, like the Drug Treatment Court, as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the Member opposite about a week and a half ago in Estimates – I gave a very detailed answer in about a three-hour-and-45-minute meeting – COVID has brought in so many challenges for us in actually expanding services. There was a challenge previous with the expansion of services. Once you move outside of metro or even the Western part of the province, these courts, whether it be the Family Violence Intervention Court or the Drug Treatment Court, actually require wraparound services – one, for example, would be the John Howard Society – and individual counselling.

What we find as we move out of the more, I guess, urban areas, it's very hard to get these wraparound services in place but it's something we're working to do, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The second wave of COVID-19 is coming. As I understand it, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has approved the use of a disinfectant fogging machine to sanitize this Chamber. An independent school and at least one other private, post-secondary college have purchased them to help sanitize their facilities throughout the day.

I ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure: Will he provide disinfectant fogging machines to all schools over 200 students to keep our schools sanitized and our students, teachers, staff and their families safe?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know this is an issue that the Member continues to ask about. As I've continued to say, Mr. Speaker, we've provided additional custodians, additional hours to custodial workers through the English School District and through all schools in the province. I haven't been made aware of any concerns or any issues by the English School District. I do know that these machines, Mr. Speaker, the success of the machines, there are varying views on that, but I'm certainly willing to look into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberal government has delayed decision making by establishing a hoard of task forces comprised of people outside of government.

I ask the minister: What are the terms of reference for the task force on economic recovery?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think we've delayed decision making at all. I think that we're asking the best and the brightest in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, some of our most esteemed colleagues that are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for their advice, for their consideration. They have expertise to lend to the province. I think that we should always be open to good suggestions and good discussions around how best to move forward in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To her question, I did respond to her yesterday, actually, privately, and said that as soon as the terms of reference are available I would make sure that she had a copy of them and I'll make sure the House has a copy of them, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that we are talking to the chair of the committee and she is working with the task force to develop them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It would be lovely to write your own job description. Given that that is happening, I'm wondering: Have we outsourced our decision making to the United Kingdom? Are we back to being under British rule?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Quite disrespectful, Mr. Speaker. Here is a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, a proud one, who has worked very, very hard, has an international reputation as a change manager, change leader, who has volunteered her time to lend her expertise to this province to ensure that we have the breadth and depth of her knowledge.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are collaborative on this side of the House. Clearly, Members opposite may not be, but we are collaborative on this side of the House. When we ask volunteers to take on a task, we work with them to develop a terms of reference, to develop the outcomes that we will

have, because we want to have the best possible outcomes for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: In years, what is the length of all the P3 contracts currently held by the provincial government?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, that's a very technical question right now for me to answer at this time. I know that all of our P3s have come in on time, on budget; very much respected professionals take part in this P3 process. As I said here a couple days ago, they do a mock-up when they're building it. The actual people who use the building get a part of the mock-up and get a say in how the building is being built. We give 30 years in which they run the maintenance on these buildings. So in 30 years' time when we get these buildings they should be in the condition they are today, except for they are 30 years older.

We are having good success, Mr. Speaker, with the current P3s.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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

I would like to provide some clarification to a question and answer that was just provided, the question by the Member about the production of 135,000 barrels per day to service Newfoundland and Labrador. I can confirm that 135,000 barrels may have been produced, but the province actually only uses 10 to 15 per cent and that the rest is and has been exported in the past. I just wanted to put that out for clarification so that people have the right information.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm presenting on a very familiar petition again today. I was thinking about bringing in the petition for the refinery, but I guess my opportunity to add solutions and add suggestions have past on that one. I guess I'll keep going with Bull Arm and see if we can make sure a plan gets put in place for that.

The people of my region of Placentia West - Bellevue, Mr. Speaker, have been pretty decimated in that last while. With the news of Husky in Argientia, the news of no movement on Bull Arm and the decimation of the sale of the refinery, it's just one thing after another.

To me it seems like the whole issue, really, is about planning. So I'm presenting this petition again today on behalf of the citizens of Placentia West - Bellevue hoping that this will offer some solution or it will offer some credence to the department to say that it's something that is very important to the province and it needs to be acted upon now.

WHEREAS there are no current operations at the Bull Arm fabrication site, there's a potential to rejuvenate the local economy, as well as the provincial economy, Mr. Speaker. The lack of the local economy – it's about the spinoffs. We just had the minister speak about the spinoffs.

We had a meeting with the industry proponents. We're talking about bring your solutions and this kind of stuff; we didn't even get an invite. So like I said, we would love to sit in on some of these meetings to see where the direction is going for the province because that was the whole spirit of asking for the debate.

I will say to the minister, thank you very much for agreeing to the debate on the refinery. That was very well respected and it provided some solace to the people in the immediate area and the province as to our way forward kind of thing.

When it comes to spinoffs and support, this is something that's for the world stage. These companies that we just heard in the Ministerial Statement, I really don't know what to say to that because these are the companies that are going to be impacted directly. Not only are we looking for a Plan B we're looking for a Plan A.

Actually on the petition here today, Mr. Speaker, the dates that the people signed were actually October 29 and October 30, 2019. That's how long this file was minimum being in my possession. Like I said for the people of the province, for the economy, for everything that we need, we need leadership now and we need a team to follow. It seems to be that we have more solutions then the other side. I'm asking the minister to please get a Plan A for Bull Arm because the Plan A on the refinery hasn't worked.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: My petition is for fair electricity rates for Labrador Indigenous communities, Mr. Speaker. This is a petition I presented before.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that fair electricity rates be provided to Torngat Mountains residents in Northern Labrador Indigenous communities of Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet.

The rates charged to Northern Labrador residents are cost prohibitive to using electric heat and therefore rates are cost prohibitive to adequately heating their homes. The rationale for this petition is to bring electricity rates more in line with what our neighbour residents of the Lake Melville region pay.

For the first thousand kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountain residents are charged the same rate as neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region; however, above the ceiling of 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains' residents pay six times the rate of Lake Melville residents, jumping to 18.5 cents a kilowatt hour. The 1,000-kilowatt hour ceiling prevents many residents from being able to afford to heat their homes with electric heat. Low-income families and households don't have the manpower to haul wood. They are the greatest impacted.

Poorly heated houses also result in damage, creating expensive repairs from frozen pipelines, moisture damage and mould. Poorly heated houses also create social and mental health issues that can be long lasting. We strongly believe that changes to electricity rates need to be made for the northern residents of Torngat Mountains.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the lifeline block up to 3,500 kilowatt hours when applying the Northern Strategic Plan subsidy to the electricity rates of Northern residents of Torngat Mountains.

Mr. Speaker, I've already presented this petition before, but I never got a chance to recognize the inclusion in the budget for the prefeasibility study. I'd really like to thank the Deputy Premier and the government for including that, because electricity rates, food costs and health care, just basically the living standards in my district are tied now to actually getting a road. That's very, very important.

I was also going to talk a lot about that life block and the difference it would make if it was increased up to 3,500, just to be able to have people to be able to use electric heat, not to heat

their homes but to offset the reliance on snowmobile to get wood and diesel fuel.

Also, one point I'd like to make today is about women. It was raised in the House, the issue we just dealt with. Right now, females are dependent on others – men – to actually haul wood to help them heat their homes because electricity is too expensive. Diesel last winter cost a hundred dollars more a drum than in Lake Melville. I'm asking for this petition to be considered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Budget Speech.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

It is a privilege and an honour to sit here and speak on this important matter this afternoon. It's a very huge responsibility that we here in the House of Assembly have when we're discussing matters of the budget. This opportunity that we have to speak, for example, today gives us time to also talk about matters in our district.

I had planned on speaking about a number of issues, but, of course, the most important issue that's facing the people of the District of Harbour Main right now involves the oil and gas

industry and the jobs that are affected in the District of Harbour Main.

I was elected to speak on behalf of my constituents over approximately 17 months ago and I take that responsibility very serious, as I'm sure that each Member in the House of Assembly does. It's a responsibility to try to improve the lives of the people that I represent. I take my leadership from these people. I guess I can say that I see it that I am their voice because many of them come to me and come to our office with their concerns and with their issues, with their problems, with their challenges.

The people I talk to on a daily basis, the emails, the phone calls that we receive. Just alone two days ago, our office had to return 30 messages just in the one day. These messages involve people primarily who are now out of work; who are looking at going on income support; who are trying to find jobs; who are very stressed, unbelievably stressed and anxious, Mr. Speaker. They're worried about their futures. They feel like they've been forgotten.

I've had workers, very experienced tradespeople, very highly skilled tradespeople, who now really don't know where they're going to turn. They're trying to cope; they're trying to manage. They're out looking for work, sending résumés everywhere. They're all vying for the same jobs.

Mr. Speaker, from what we hear, I think it's important to put it all in context. Let's look at first of all how important this industry is to our province. It is no question the economic engine of our province. Over 20,000 direct and indirect jobs depend on the offshore oil industry. It's estimated to be at about 30 per cent of our GDP. Thirty per cent of our economy is dependent on this industry alone. There's no question of how serious this matter is that we face and I think it's really important that we stress the magnitude of this problem that is facing our people.

I see it first-hand in the community in Harbour Main, especially over the last number of weeks. We perhaps have the highest percentage of tradespeople in the District of Harbour Main. Again, they are hard-working, they're educated, they're experienced and they've worked in not

only the oil and gas industry but spinoff industries from it.

As I said, they are facing incredible stress, incredible uncertainty. The human cost, the mental health and wellness issue is incredible. What we're seeing is that people really don't know what is going to happen and they're reaching out to say, help us. What are we doing? And they need answers.

Mr. Speaker, I have to express disappointment this week when asking questions in the House of Assembly, and my questions have often been described as ridiculous and things of that nature. Well, these are not ridiculous questions. These are legitimate, valid questions that we, as Members in the House of Assembly, ask of our government of the day. They have a responsibility to answer, and they say we're playing politics. How is that politics when I'm asking questions that I receive from people? They phone me up and want to know what is happening. Are there negotiations going on? These are valid, acceptable, legitimate questions that are treated as if they're ridiculous; they're described as ridiculous. We have no place for that in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the specific issue that I'm just going to talk about – there are so many issues in my district that I could speak on, but the main one is the oil and gas industry and how the workers feel that they have been forgotten and they can't get answers and they don't know where to turn. I think it's important to put this in some context as well. I'm not even talking about the Come By Chance Refinery yet. I'm just talking about some of the other blows that the oil and gas industry has experienced over the last number of weeks.

Canada's oil and natural gas producers, CAPP, had released the community and business leaders call for federal investment in offshore. I'm going to read from that report, Mr. Speaker: "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."

What do they mean? They say: "\$11 billion in provincial revenues impacting programs, infrastructure, education and health care

throughout communities in” our province; “\$59 billion” – \$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.”

Mr. Speaker, that just in a summary, indicates in general the billions of dollars that will be lost in economic benefits that are tied to these major offshore oil projects which are at stake. People need to understand the magnitude. Our people need to know that, and I don’t know if they’re getting that accurate picture.

We’re going to lose thousands of good, stable, well-paying jobs, which before had enabled Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to own homes, to have a high-quality of life for themselves and their families. Now they don’t even know how they’re going to pay their bills, and many are going to have to leave their beloved province.

When we look at some of the impacts that we have seen, the blows on our economy, let’s look at West White Rose. A massive important project, it’s shelved. This project is shelved. It’s mothballed. Yes, Husky is reviewing this project and all other East Coast operations offshore, but this was a very important and is a very important project to our economy.

Let’s look at Hibernia. Hibernia has slowed production. In terms of Hibernia, originally, it was thought that Hibernia contained 520 million barrels of oil and now it’s expected to produce 1,644 million barrels of oil, and only 1,158 have been produced so far. So there’s so much abundance left out there. There’s so much potential; yet, they’ve stopped drilling, Mr. Speaker – stopped drilling. It’s gone, stopped, and production has slowed.

The Bay du Nord Project, shelved. Look at the Terra Nova FPSO, more should be done on this, Mr. Speaker. We see that that has been mothballed. It’s floating out in Conception Bay awaiting, perhaps indefinitely, its postponed dry dock work in Spain.

At the rally we attended a couple of weeks ago outside Confederation Building, one of the chefs on the Terra Nova FPSO stated, and she said this at the rally. She said: I’ve seen more layoffs in the last six months than I have in the last 10 years. She said: Life is far from good. She said: You can see the stress on people’s faces. Mr. Speaker, I see the stress and I hear it in their voices of the people in the District of Harbour Main.

Mr. Speaker, I look at some of the impacts that this will have on the people. These are just the West White Rose, Hibernia, Bay du Nord and Terra Nova, all of these projects. Can we just blame it on COVID and global prices? I really think that is not appropriate. We need to look at – yes, these are factors that impact it, no question. We all admit that, we all acknowledge that, but that does not absolve the government here of responsibility. They are the government. It is under their watch that these things are happening and we need to see more action, we need to see more innovation, we need to see concrete solutions.

Mr. Speaker, let me speak on the Come By Chance Refinery closure. That is yet another fatal blow for this industry and for our province. The oil and gas industry, as I’ve stated, and we all recognize it’s the backbone of our fragile economy, but now we have a repeated setback. Thousands of jobs now have been lost. The estimate from Trades NL is that it will be close to 2,000 jobs will be lost as a result of this closure; 500 direct workers and approximately another 1,500 will potentially be out of work.

Mr. Speaker, these are very concerning facts. This is not about playing politics. Government doesn’t want us to emphasize it or stress it but this isn’t about politics. This is about the realities, the facts that we are seeing here and the impact that this is having on the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to also point out on the issue of the \$320 million, the federal funding that’s slated to support the offshore industry. Yes, I will acknowledge it is a good first step but I will agree with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers who commented on the announcement. They stated it’s lacking in detail and they have concern of what’s going to

happen in terms of operators making investments. They said the situation in the industry is dire with thousands of jobs and projects at work.

Their concern, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, is will the support actually help the operators overcome the critical challenges. Of course, what we ask, as the Official Opposition, is this going to give jobs to our people. Is this going to happen?

Mr. Speaker, when we look at these circumstances here we have to call upon the Premier for leadership, we have to call on the Premier for immediate action and we have to urge upon the Premier that this offshore oil and gas industry – this is a crisis. No matter what way you look at it, we are in a crisis. I raise this issue again and I will continue to raise this on behalf of the constituents in Harbour Main and the other constituents in districts in the region that are affected.

Mr. Speaker, reviewing the budget, I guess the most important number that comes out to me in this budget is the number of jobs that is clear that will be lost this year that's slated in the budget – over 13 jobs. Really, I don't see any evidence of a plan for how these jobs will be created. It really is about jobs.

The budget is not just about numbers, and it really lacks – I would say that what the people want to hear: Where is the plan? When we look at different initiatives or the task force that is out – there are studies and there are Committees and there are task forces, but where's the plan? This stuff has been studied to death. We need action, we need vision and we need concrete ideas.

When I look at the budget, the \$25-a-day child care, I think that's a great initiative. I might add that the PCs had this in our platform in the last election. That, of course, gets unnoticed or unmentioned by the government, but that is a fact.

Insulin pumps, as well, we were very strong in mandating and advocating for insulin pumps. Again, where do we see it? In the budget. I would even say their budget, in terms of presenting as an inspiring, original document, I think it's quite lacking. When we look at what

really is in that budget it's perhaps a weak budget, lackluster at best.

Mr. Speaker, what we need now is stability in our economy. We have to be concerned about the health and safety of our people. We certainly will support the budget, however, because we need that stability in our economy. We don't need an election or what we have gone through in the last few days with respect to the election and the resistance from government on our plea not to have an election until next year. They resisted that very strongly, I might add, Mr. Speaker.

We are responsible in terms of how we look at the situation in our province right now. We need to have stability of the economy. We need to have political leadership through this pandemic. We don't need to be diverting attention to election campaigns or anything of the sort like that. We need to focus on what's important here.

Our caucus and the PC Party are concerned about the health and wellness of people. We're concern about jobs. We need to see what the new Premier will provide, what the new Premier is planning. Hopefully, we will see that in the 2021 budget. They won't call another snap election like they did the last time. So, hopefully, we will have an opportunity to see that budget before the next election.

Mr. Speaker, looking at all of these concerns, I think the people need reassurances; the people of our province need reassurances. They need to have a government that is willing to answer questions, not deflect the questions. Not get angry because we're asking questions.

We're asking legitimate questions. It's not about politics. It's about real concerns of the people of our province. They have a right to know information. We don't need secrecy. We need transparency, we need accountability and we're willing to work on that. We want that. But when they get defensive, when we see, like we did in Question Period this week, the defensiveness, the condescension, the anger that comes from some of these ministers when they're responding to our questions, we have legitimate questions.

Mr. Speaker, I find that very disheartening, seeing in the House this attitude and the tone

that the government takes when we try to get some information and when we try to get some honest, transparent information about the status of our economy, of jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: What would we do differently, Mr. Speaker? We would work hard to get the economy back on track.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We would be champions. We are champions of our offshore oil industry. We would take immediate action to get West White Rose project and Terra Nova back on track.

We would be working with businesses to provide incentives to support them. Businesses also are the economic drivers of our province. Our small-business owners; we need to encourage them and to make sure that they continue to be the job creators. We have to stop the population drain but we need a reason for people to stay. Our focus is on jobs, jobs, jobs and that's our plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm going to continue on the non-partisan direction that we've just gone through. I'm going to consider on a non-partisan way. From my standpoint, facts really do matter in a situation we're facing today. People always have to be put before politics and I'm glad that many of us in the House are doing that.

I also want to highlight the fact of some of the things that we've been through as a global

community. We're in the midst of a global pandemic, a crisis. I would agree with my hon. colleague for Harbour Main that we are in the middle of a crisis. Absolutely. Not just in this province, of a global nature. Something the world has not seen in over a hundred or more years.

This is a price war that's occurred. It's COVID-related. Oil companies right across the globe have lost over a trillion dollars. That's 12 zeros. That's an amazing amount of money. It's difficult to even fathom how important that is. It's hard to fathom how big that number is.

We ask about jobs, jobs, jobs and I would tend to agree. We need that. That's part of the reason why we've created *The Way Forward*. That's part of the reason why you've heard the hon. minister responsible for innovation and technology talk about some of the sectors that are doing very well in this province, being the tech sector and the job creator that it is. We have to be there to support them. We have to be there to try to encourage the schools to increase enrolments. We have to be there to support that. We have to be there to find transition for people that are underemployed or want to change their career to move into something that is a growing career, that can be done anywhere in this province. The tech sector has been very successful in that.

I've heard numbers from the sector itself of anywhere between 3,000 and 5,000 jobs over the next three to five years. That's substantive. We don't have the people currently right now that are educated enough to take hold of those opportunities. I would agree with my hon. colleague that we have to put parameters in place to ensure that success. That's a few of the things we're working on with the tech sector. Whether it be forestry, fishery, agriculture or aquaculture, even infrastructure, we've taken the politics out of infrastructure spending and road spending to make sure that we get more value for money, which is the important piece of it.

I'm a glass half full kind of guy and I have been for my whole life. So I want to talk a few minutes about the investments that we made in this province, not just in this budget but previous to this budget.

I had the pleasure of sitting on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. The work that group of individuals did right across this Island, meeting with hundreds of people with lived experience – and I thank the hon. Minister of Health for giving me the opportunity to lead, in some cases, on that file and work very closely with him on it. From my standpoint, I can't imagine where we'd be if we didn't do the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and then transition that information, what we heard from the people right across our province, into what you see today, *Towards Recovery*.

From our standpoint, we've made significant investments in mental health and addictions. Is it enough? Absolutely not. I don't sit here today to say that it's perfect because it's far from it, but we have made significant improvements. Wait times are down significantly and in some cases eradicated. What we've done as a group is focused our attention on making sure we make smart investments.

I'm very proud. That's probably the single biggest achievement that we've made as a government, our investments in mental health and addictions. I'm so proud of what we've been able to achieve and I'm not saying that it's over because it's far from over.

One of the things that I think is also understated – I mean I live in the Avalon region, in St. John's, and I'm happy that I represent the most easterly point in the St. John's region. I get the opportunity to drive by, on a regular basis, the work that's happening where the new site of the adult mental health facility will be located here in St. John's. I can't express to you how important it is to replace a building that was built when Queen Victoria sat on the throne. It's so important to the people that utilize the services there, not just the individuals that are dealing with a difficult mental health issue, but also the staff people that work in those facilities.

I've had the ability to tour that facility on a couple of occasions through my involvement with the Department of Health and Community Services and I'm very proud that we've decided to move forward on that project. We can see the land being turned over; I think the berms are in place starting there now. I'm looking forward to

seeing the steel and stuff go up. It's going to move fairly quickly now that we've got to that point. I'm excited about that.

In that same vein I'm also very excited about the fact that I had the ability to go with the minister of the day, of Transportation and Works at the time, and the minister of Justice and Public Safety to make an announcement in 2019 about the replacement to Her Majesty's Penitentiary. Anybody in this House of Assembly or in the public that have ever had the ability or the displeasure, I guess, to go down and see that facility will understand fully why we need to make an investment in a new prison for inmates and for the staff that provide the services to those inmates.

It happens that the prison will be built in East White Hills, which happens to be in my district. I'm excited about that part but, more importantly, I'm excited about what that means for mental health and addictions in our province, what that means for helping those individuals, that are sometimes the most vulnerable in our society, get the help they require in a facility that's a bit better – quite significantly better – than what they're in today.

We have to remember – and anyone who listens to *Open Line* or anything like that will have heard Paddy Daly say on a number of occasions that the people that are going into the facility are there for two years, less a day. We want them to come out better individuals than when they went into that facility. I don't think that's possible, given the situation – it's not as easy to do, given the situation of the old infrastructure that we have there.

We've identified a need there. We're working through that process, hopefully, to see that new facility built in a timely fashion. We know these things take a significant amount of time, to do consultations, make sure it's built to the way we need it to be and addresses the needs that we want it to do.

We want to make sure those individuals that do offend have the ability to get some support, get some help so they don't reoffend when they do come out; which is we want them to be on the right path so they can become upstanding individuals within the community, to make an

advancement to the community versus a detractor to the community. I think I'd be remiss if I didn't highlight the fact that I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish there and what we've started. It's not accomplished, by no stretch, but what we've been able to start.

I'd also like to take a page out of the Minister of Health's playbook when I talk about my district. He tends to do that eloquently every time he tends to speak in this House, and I'd like the opportunity to do the same.

I represent one of the most ethnic, diverse districts in our province. You don't have to look very far for that. When you go to East Point Elementary, one of my elementary schools, over 17 countries represented in the school population there. That comes with its concerns and issues, but our teachers there work very closely, work very hard to make those students excel within the school system. I'm very proud of the fact that I get the pleasure of representing such an ethnic, diverse district and all that comes with that, that we get to experience the melting pot that is the culture of the world in my district.

Now, I know many of my colleagues in this House get the ability to represent districts that have a lot of different – whether it be nationalities or locations or products or services that are provided to those communities, but I can tell you one of the biggest things that I'm happiest about in my district is the ethnic diversity that I get to see each and every day when I knock on a door or when I go to visit a school in pre-COVID times. So it's interesting to allow you to do that.

I also have half of the Royal St. John's Regatta that happens in my district. I say half, because my hon. colleague for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi represents the other stakes. Maybe stakes one, two and three and I have four and five. I would be remiss if I didn't say how big an impact that had on my summer, the fact that the Royal St. John's Regatta didn't happen this year, and disappointing from a tourism perspective. I know the Deputy Premier in the province played a very large role in the Royal St. John's Regatta for – I won't say many decades, but for a while.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. DAVIS: Absolutely.

That's the single, biggest tourism event we have in this province. Just for everyone's understanding, that's the single, biggest event we have in this province for tourism. It's bookended by pretty unique opportunities that didn't happen this year as well: the Folk Festival, as well as the George Street Festival. A lot of people who tend to come to this province then, during that time frame, tend to get a huge value from the culture we have during that time, that 10, 12, 14-day period.

I'm really excited by what we see. They have a great board at the Royal St. John's Regatta and those other organizations that were impacted by COVID. I'm happy that our government was able to support them, to help them continue into 2021, which is what we all look for. As Minister of Tourism, that's what I'm looking for, the survival year of 2020 moving into, hopefully, the growth year of 2021.

I'd just like the opportunity to say thank you to those volunteers that sit on those boards and agencies that put off these great events for the tourists that come here, but, also, our local people get the opportunity to avail of that. I know many people's summers were impacted by what they used to do and what they historically always did that they didn't get the opportunity to do this year, but we always have to be mindful of the fact that it was always done with the best interest of the public health and safety.

Like many of my colleagues in this House, I have three schools. Some have many, many more than that in this House. I happen to have three schools. One that I've adopted, that's not in my district, but I've adopted and like to go in and support and provide any advice or funding that can possibly happen from what I can help them transition to.

This is a difficult time for them as well. They've had to struggle to get open, make sure their students are there. All of the teachers that I've talked to in all of the schools in my district, I've had the opportunity to touch base with and see how they're progressing. Obviously, it's a different challenging time, but they're quite happy to have their students back in school and working with them. It's not going to be the same

until we get past COVID, but what I can say is I'm very happy they've opened. It's going very well at this point and I hope that continues.

I would also like to highlight some of the beautiful trails we have in my district. I don't have to go too far but the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, I think, has walked almost every trail in my district, but almost every other district in the province too over the years. I would like to say thank you to the volunteers who work on those trails to make sure they're open for the people in our province to avail of them. Thank you to the East Coast Trail that traverses many parts of our many districts on the East Coast here.

With the little bit of time I have left, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to highlight a couple of things from 2020 from my Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation – or, as I prefer to call it, TCAR. As announced in *Budget 2020*, we are broadening the eligibility for the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program to include professional artists, as well as musicians that are impacted by COVID-19. This is an important piece for those industry players that have provided so much for the fabric of our culture.

Many of the country's finest artists, writers and performers reside right here in this province. We don't have to go very far to think about the names. I encourage everybody in this House to think of the singers or playwrights or performers that have made an impact in their lives each and every day or each and every performance they get the opportunity to see.

As we know, the pandemic has had a direct impact on the cultural community in our province. We are in a process of developing the eligibility criteria to provide professional artists and musicians with access to a support program. More details will come out in the next couple of weeks on that. We look forward to moving that money out to those affected artists, professional artists, as quick as we can.

One of the other highlights that are really interesting from *Budget 2020* for my department is it also includes a \$1-million increase to additional funding to ArtsNL. That is a commitment we made and it's a commitment we

kept as a government. I'm very happy the provincial investment in ArtsNL has moved up almost to \$4 million. The requirement to go to \$5 million is what we said we would do. We're working towards that as we speak, and hopefully in budget 2021-2022, we will be able to fill that full commitment that we said we would do.

I'd just like to say thank you to the artists and ArtsNL for the great work they do, for reaching out to the people in our province and providing that great service to those artists and people that require it the most.

Also, for support for film and development, anyone who was in our Estimates this morning would know how well I fully support the film and television industry and how our government is trying our best to expand on that and seize the opportunity that exists for, mostly, that untapped resource. Currently, for the first time in our history as a province, we have two prime-time shows shooting simultaneously. That didn't happen overnight. The skill base had to be developed. I thank *Republic of Doyle* for helping with that and many of the other productions that have come after *Republic of Doyle* to help develop the infrastructure. I don't mean physical buildings; I mean the infrastructure, as in the skills, staff and labour that we have here in this province.

Those two productions alone – *Hudson & Rex* and *The Surrealtor* – are going to employ almost 400 people in well-paying jobs for families that are going to be supported. All that money is going to be spent right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're leveraging not only the little bit of investment we make with respect to the tax credits or the equity funds, but we're going to leverage – I think in *Hudson & Rex*'s case it's some \$28 million or \$29 million per season that's going to be spent mostly in this province. We invest a little bit to help leverage that money. I'm excited about what the prospects are as we move forward on that.

I also had the ability to tour both *Hudson & Rex* and *The Surrealtor*, the sets there, to see the huge benefits that exist for our staff that come directly from the investments that we make in this industry. I'd encourage anybody, when you drive around in St. John's when they're shooting in St. John's, or any community around that they

happen to be shooting in, just take a look at the infrastructure that travels with each one of these shows and the people that they employ. It's quite amazing to see and I'm quite excited about what lies ahead for this industry.

Mr. Speaker, I only have a couple of moments left to highlight a few things, but I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about how the tourism sector has been negatively impacted, there's no doubt. I'm not going to sit in this chair here in this House of Assembly and paint a rosy picture that every tourism operator is happy and going to make money. 2020 was about a survival mentality for our tourism operators and hospitality sector. We made strategic investments where we could, given the fiscal constraints that we do have.

We've also lobbied hard with the federal government and our colleagues in the federal government to elongate those programs that they put in place to support the tourism sector, with great success I'd like to add. Not just because I was advocating, but all of the federal and provincial ministers were lobbying for the same thing. We met on a weekly basis and, in most cases, when this first started we were talking with the minister almost on a daily basis.

I could go on and on about some of the positive things that are coming out of not just *Budget 2020*, but the investments that this government saw fit to make. I do thank the hon. colleagues on the other side of the House for supporting a good budget here. Is it perfect? Absolutely not but we're not in perfect times, we're in imperfect times and this is a budget for imperfect times.

We're trying our best to manage through a crisis. What I can say is I'm looking forward to the bright future that is Newfoundland and Labrador. I'll always stand up for the people of our province and the bright future that exists with it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to my next opportunity to speak to this very important budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a great privilege to speak to my third Address in Reply of budget since I was elected in 2017. So now I've spoken to as many budgets as elections I ran in.

Mr. Speaker, as I sit here today and reflect upon past budgets and consider this one, when the Members say not a whole lot has changed as it comes to the budget, I can agree with that. I can agree with what we have dedicated our province's resources to being spent on largely is necessary. Largely is necessary is far different from what we can afford.

Mr. Speaker, over 30 per cent of the money we spend this year is now leveraged on our future, with no thoughts of ever paying it back. When we talk about spending money in certain directions and certain avenues, I really wish we could have a sober second thought. Right now, debt service is our second-biggest expense in our provincial budget. If one of us or any of us had that kind of debt ratio at home, we'd be pretty soon to start cutting back and shifting things around.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the previous speaker, the hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, talk about leveraging the funds we have to maximize the spending in our province. That's what we have to do. We have to try to get the biggest bang for our buck. We have to try to encourage private business to invest in our economy, to invest in our province. We have to encourage consumers to invest in business and their economy themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the district I represent was incorporated – basically, it straddles the two urban cities of Mount Pearl and St. John's. Mount Pearl itself was incorporated back in the 1950s. My great-grandfather sat around the table when those discussions were had. A lot of the residents who originally settled in Mount Pearl back in those '50s still live there. It's a great community and great community-minded people. We also have a demographic of new to the district, both in the St. John's side and the Mount Pearl side. There are young professionals or mature professionals, all contributing to our economy through either the public service or in industry.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time in our history that I would hazard a guess to say that the population of Mount Pearl is declining. We're seeing – and I've said this before – a resettlement in Mount Pearl. We're seeing our youth and even some of our retired seniors leaving our province. They question the future here. They question the future decisions of our government.

I got involved in politics not because I wanted to become a politician, it was because I could see that in 2015 we were going to elect an administration on the basis that it was their turn and not because they had a solid plan. By no means do I mean this as a discredit to many of the Members on the opposite side. I would like to consider many of them my friends. I would like to consider many of them very well intended, but there's a difference between intention and execution and that's where we have been failing our people.

We have been failing our people in the execution of well-intended ideas. I can remember when this government first came into power. There were mass amounts of public consultations for which I commend them. Cabinet Committees were set up to listen to industries and listen to community groups so that this government could address the needs of those groups and industries. Largely, *The Way Forward* has been a dismal failure. A dismal failure not in production but a dismal failure in execution.

I just recently listened to the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, and I do understand he is in a difficult position. The energy industry in particular, as we all know, is facing severe pressures beyond our control, but how we react to those pressures is what's going to count. Are we going to choose to be the victim or the survivor of this trillion-dollar loss? Within every challenge there lies opportunity. So we as a province, through our energy industry, we have to look to where we can capitalize on this – I can say nothing more than a tragedy that has been brought on to our economy, largely due to COVID, but also due to economic and, I guess, international pressures on the oil industry.

We're talking about a \$320-million investment which is still in progress. Madam Speaker, I have to say that is too little too late. The wheels of change have already been enacted within our oil industry. We often hear the comment about we're closing the doors after the horses have left the barn. Well, not only have we closed the doors after the horses have left the barn, this administration has gone chasing after the horses and, meanwhile, the barn is crumbling to the ground.

We need to salvage what we have left, and it's not going to come from the federal government. It was only recently that it was posed on the floor of the House of Commons if there would be any further funding coming for our province. Sadly enough, the hon. Minister Freeland's comment was: There will be no more funding coming for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Speaker, that is disappointing. That is extremely disappointing, and I can tell you why. Because what this province has contributed to this federal partnership in the form of resources for the rest of Canada to enhance their value, to employ their people is immeasurable, and it will continue to be that way as long as we sit idly by. Now, while I do understand there have been some efforts and while I do understand there have been consultations, but the only way that our province has ever, ever benefited has been when we stand up and fight. Stand up and let them know not to mess with our futures.

Madam Speaker, I also listened to the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour when he was addressing the budget. He was speaking of his own community and the district he represents. They're wonderful people, industrious people, people that have contributed to the economy as well. But on second glance and second consideration of what he said, all of those industries and occupations were entirely reliant on government spending, right from the Crown Lands Division, the forestry and lands division, even down to the paper mill which is in existence largely due to a financial loan guarantee by the previous administration.

Madam Speaker, when we start talking about our economy being reliant on government, a government that had to borrow \$3 billion to remain in operation, we have big problems. The

only way we're going to change those problems is not by money. Money has never been the solution to our problems; it has been working people with money. Working people with money with confidence in our economy, working people with money willing to invest in our economy, businesses with confidence in our economy.

That brings me to my own personal situation – not my own personal situation but an industry which I have a deep personal interest in, and that being agriculture. Madam Speaker, there's been quite the expression of investment of funds into the agriculture industry and largely it has been on the direction of a former ministry that may, again, have been well intended but ill informed.

Madam Speaker, we're looking at \$2.5 million being dedicated to the establishment of one individual enterprise. If that \$2.5 million was given out to industry partners, it would result in 35 per cent more production capacity within our agricultural industry. Not only that, an individual farmer qualifies for \$3,000 per acre of land clearing in development money, but within this \$2.5-million project it is speculated that the contractor for clearing the property was given over \$5,000 an acre to prepare this land.

I ask, Madam Speaker, how can farmers be expected to clear and develop industry at only 60 per cent of the funding as one super farm that the government more than likely would like to have as their poster child? I've said this time and time again, farmers and the industry are very practical people. They have no time for political theatre. Political theatre does not feed people. It is the practical work and approach of our farmers.

Madam Speaker, I think far too long have we been accepting of the meager crumbs we get from Ottawa. I guess I'd be remiss and wouldn't be very historic if I didn't include a farm story or farm analogy in this. While I'm sure I'll probably raise a bit of laughter, I'd like you to listen to the message.

One of the most, I guess, maligned creatures on my farm is a pig. Their reputation is ill deserved. A pig is actually the fifth smartest species known to man. So it's a pretty good chance that a pig is smarter than many humans – no

reflection on the present company. A pig is the only animal that will never overeat. A pig will only eat till its belly is full. Why do we say if you eat like a pig? When I'm accused of that I say, thank you very much, a pig is a very clean animal. A pig looks after its affairs. A pig actually has the ability to choose how many embryos it carries, depending on the food availability.

That brings me to the subject of my story. A pig takes three months, three weeks, three days and three hours to give birth. The ideal number of pigs born is 12, and that being because there are 12 nipples on a mother pig to drink from. How a pig's hierarchy and how well a piglet performs is how aggressive it is. The pig's nipples closest to the heart are the ones that produce the most milk and it is only one piglet's initiative that puts it at that primary nipple.

If we're content to take the backend of the pig – and I apologize for the expression if anyone finds it crude. If we're content to be on the hind teat, that's where we'll always finish up. We will be the runt. We will be the runt of Confederation. In order for that to change, we will have to stand up for ourselves and never accept less than what we feel we deserve, not what someone else tells us.

I had the opportunity to speak to one of my colleagues across the way in reference to Muskrat Falls. It was a side conversation. I said: This is the situation with Muskrat Falls. It is an asset to our province that we must make the best of. It is an asset to our province that we should be proud of at this point and turn the conversation. The conversation quickly digressed to the expense of Muskrat Falls and the value of it in the future. I happened to bring up Churchill Falls and the situation in which we have been far the runt of the agreement.

That particular colleague from across the way said to us: But did you know we've made money every year from Churchill Falls? I almost passed out because how could we accept the meagre revenue from Churchill Falls when we look next door to how much they have benefited. It is that exact approach that we will accept little or nothing. That is what has put us in this position, the continued interference with government into private business. Government is not responsible

for making jobs; government is responsible for creating an environment for job creation.

Business owners have a particular characteristic. It's the will to put everything on the line, to take those risks and invest. I can tell you there are a lot of business owners questioning about investing in Newfoundland and Labrador. Do you know why, Madam Speaker? It is because of continued government interference in business. Government needs to put supports in place for businesses. They need to put supports in place that foster the normal expansion or establishment of commerce.

Madam Speaker, I am a big proponent of many social programs that would enable those who are challenged working in modest or low incomes enjoy a better quality of life. I've stood up in this House and petitioned time and time again for bus passes for those who do find themselves in modest incomes. I am not about handouts; I am about hand ups. I am about giving people and families the opportunity to better themselves. That's why I don't agree with the current situation with bus passes. I am a proponent that everybody who is in subscription of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program should have access to bus passes. That includes the people of Corner Brook. They also have a public transit system.

Enabling one to get out and work for their families, enabling them to do their share, to feel pride in being self-supporting, that is one of the best things we can do for the people of our province. We talk of the new construction of the new mental health facility and the correctional institute. I actually had the privilege of attending an announcement over the summer of the expansion of overnight beds at The Gathering Place.

Madam Speaker, while those are great and while those are much needed in our community, it is a reflection of our failure, not as a government but as leaders, that people have to get to that point. We need to focus on more community-based support that prevent people from having to resort to crime; that prevent people from having to resort to overnight shelters.

We need to stop the tide of mental health by community support. When it gets to the crisis

level we have failed. We have failed and we will continue to fail if we only address the crisis situation. We have to back it up and support from the beginning. That is where we will be successful in bettering our people.

I reflect on expenditures in years past and I said last night in Estimates. One of the big concerns whenever I submit my financials for my business is miscellaneous supplies and professional fees and services because they're so nondescript. I ask the government what task or what endeavour is not represented by the skill set with our own public service? If that is the case, if this government does not have the confidence in our public service, there has to be big changes made. We cannot afford to waste time on consultants. We have to act and we have to act now.

I thank you for your time and I look forward to further debate.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): The Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I'm going to stay on the high road today. I was making notes as others were speaking but probably I'll speak more from the heart today than most anywhere else.

I would like to, first of all, start off – I was going to thank the people of my district but I want to thank two people that's more important to me in all the district, I guess, and probably all the world. The MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair today did a statement on the International Day of the Girl. There are no two more important girls in my life than my wife and my daughter, who without these two supports in my life, wouldn't have me being in this hon. House. It gives me great privilege to think about those

two fine ladies as I sit here today to talk about the budget, our future for this province and the good things that we anticipate doing for this province.

Madam Speaker, I guess on that note I'll also thank every person in my district who helped put me in this position today to be able to sit in this hon. House. Every time I sit here, Madam Speaker, I think about the first time when I sat here. I looked around this room and I looked at all the pictures on the wall of all the great people that came before me, and said at some point, somewhere along the line you get the opportunity to take part in the actual structure and the future of our province.

I think that's an honour. Unless you sit here you probably don't get to realize, but it's an honour that I take with me every single day. I try not to let it change me one little bit. I still try to be the boy from the bay and I like to think about the people that I represent, the people in my district.

Madam Speaker, I just want to talk about a news release today. You talk about some good things. Today, our department, the provincial government, has reached financial close with Avalon Health Care Partnership, the team of businesses selected to design, build, finance and maintain the new 102-bed adult mental health addictions hospital.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: This will replace the old Waterford and take the stigma away. The hospital will transform the way mental health and addiction services are delivered –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please

MR. BRAGG: –in Newfoundland and Labrador with a state-of-the-art facility offering recovery-focused in-patient programming.

I can't believe the Members opposite would try to cut in on such a good news story. Madam Speaker, it's terrible. We're trying to improve mental health for this province. The Members opposite see it somewhat amusing. I don't see it as amusing. I see it as a good step forward for us

and under the *Public Procurement Act* unsuccessful proponents will have the opportunity for debriefings. That came up in this House, wondering where it's going to be.

The good news is this; we have a 30-year contract and it's on a building that's going to be built, delivered to us turnkey, for \$330 million. Everything done, every day, all the maintenance for 30 years. We're proud of that. It's going to give us 240,000 square feet and a six-story, 102-bed facility, a parking garage with the space for 1,100 vehicles and a new 60-bed hostel to replace the Agnes Cowan Hostel. That is pretty amazing.

It was good yesterday to drive past and see work actually ongoing right now. I see the fence is up, the berm will be built and the parking garage is being worked on. In 2024, we will take possession of that building, Madam Speaker. So, to me, that is a great move and I'm pound to be in this department to do it.

I want to go back and circle back to my district, Madam Speaker. I always refer to my district as the place where I live that others love to visit. I say that for good reason, Madam Speaker, because I can tell by the smile on your face you had the privilege to come to my district, as did the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, who tweeted me a picture of how happy he was with his family to be down on Lumsden Beach this summer. So the staycation part for us, for my district this summer, was a great success.

It looked abysmal as – nobody knew how bad it was going to be with COVID-19, but I stopped in to the coffee shop, Hare Bay Adventures, and they said this summer will be bad. The reports are more numbers than they ever saw before for locals, for in-province travel. That's pretty good for our district. We're not too far from the Northeast Avalon, where the most people came from. It's about a four-hour drive to get to the core of the district.

I just want to talk about my district for a second. There are over 700 kilometres of roads in my district. I have 16 fire departments. Madam Speaker, representing a rural district, you know what 16 fire departments means. It is 16 hot suppers that you have to fit in for November, December for the firemen's balls. They still call

it the firemen's ball although it's firefighters. So that is a great opportunity to get out and meet the people that you represent.

For the last four and a half, five years that I've been in this seat, being able to support the fire departments in my district with new jaws of life, bunker suits, new trucks – it's amazing. Someone said the other day, you can never go wrong with a fire truck, and some more people will say it's very political.

Every fire department in this province needs to be suited up and ready for the call, because they are on call. The vast majority of fire departments in rural Newfoundland, if not all, are 100 per cent volunteer. Those men and women that give their time so freely need our support, needs the support of this province and needs the support of their community residents.

We do what we can with the equipment. Like I said, we evaluate our trucks; we put new trucks where they need to be. We only wish we could replace them all. We have over 6,000 firefighters in this province. That's a lot of people. In my district if you look at 16 and there are 25 or 30, that's 500 or 600 firefighters, 500 or 600 volunteers – the core of the communities.

In my district, I have a ferry and in the summertime there are two ferries. Two very scenic historic communities: Change Islands and Fogo Island. Change Islands is very unique. If you ever get the chance, every person should visit Change Islands. Years ago you heard talk of Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia. You go to Change Islands and when you get on the bridge across the tickle – it's called Change Islands because there are actually two islands, one community, and there's a tickle that runs up between them. If you're not sure what a tickle would be, I guess it's a bayman's term or a nautical term for a body of water between two islands, that's a narrow channel. You can almost jump across.

My friend told me when they were young and they lived there and they would be courting the girls, they would steal someone's boat to row across the tickle, Madam Speaker. Just to go and sit on the bridge and see the old historic fishing stages that are there is absolutely – you can't do anything only take out your camera and take a

picture because there's no bad picture. You have to feel it when you go there.

The average age in most of the communities that I represent are in their 60s and 70s, and that's the people who love to talk. We call it a good yarn or a cuffer. You get out and you talk to these people. That's the grassroots of who we are. That's what made us in this province. That's the type of district I represent.

Over on Change Islands, Madam Speaker, there's a Newfoundland pony sanctuary where the lady over there has, on any given day, seven to 12 Newfoundland ponies that she's either rescued or she boards out for other people. It's pretty unique on a small island off the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland.

Then you continue on the ferry, you go over on Fogo Island. Fogo Island in itself, you have Tilting. Tilting could have been located and situated in Ireland. Everyone's accent, they're proud of it. Everybody says, I'm talking, you know where I'm from. I'm from Tilting. You know I'm not from in the city when I talk. It's so unique, and there are little communities that are – and I see the Members opposite nodding. I would encourage you guys to take the trip, take the ferry and go to Change Islands, go to Fogo Island. See what I see, what I've had the privilege to see as the Member of the House of Assembly, to be able to visit and talk to the people there. They'll tell you about the old stories.

The ferry stories, as the Member for Bell Island can attest to, haven't changed. Ferries have changed. The stories are the same, we know that and we know there always will be a challenge when you have a ferry, but you overcome the challenge of the ferry once you get off the island. Once you get off the island and you see the little communities, you get off in Stag Harbour; you go to Seldom Come By. Everybody thought it was just Seldom. It's actually on the post office. Seldom Come By is the name of the community. That's pretty unique in itself. So you have Fogo, Island Harbour and Deep Bay. You have all this Newfoundland culture and history that you can see.

They have a vibrant fish plant over there. The fish plant on Fogo Island is a great contributor to

the economy. People like to say the ferries, we shouldn't have them to the islands, and it's a drain. You try and tell that to the people on Fogo Island what they contribute to this economy. The fish plant starts in April and goes until about October, like most fish plants in the province.

Then we have the world-renowned Fogo Island Inn. What Zita Cobb did there, most people laughed at 10 years ago. But when she made that a reality, Zita and her group the Shorefast Foundation, the ability of what she did on Fogo Island was absolutely amazing what they brought to it. I asked her one time – or her brother – do people feel this is too expensive? They said, no, people love paying for the experience. Our prime minister was there. Had the chance to go ice fishing and to do a shed party. Shed parties are pretty famous around this province. The prime minister had the opportunity to do a shed party.

The town elders will take you on tours, either a walking tour or by a van around the community, and tell you all the stories. People go there to get married. People think you have to go down south to get married. People come from all around the world to go to Fogo Island to stand out on Joe Batt's, out on a point, out on a bald rock, because I can guarantee you there's not a lot of grass out around there. It's the same as the island that I live on, but that's the experience that they get.

Madam Speaker, I thought to spend less time on my district, but I guess I'm so proud of the district that I'm in. Then you have the beaches from Deadman's Bay, Musgrave Harbour, Lumsden and Cape Freels. If you see a surfer you'd think California. You see a surfer now; you can actually start thinking Lumsden and Deadman's Bay. My cousin was there kitesurfing and thought it was one of the best beaches. He had just come back from Hawaii. He thought it was one of the best beaches that he'd ever been on down there on the Straight Shore. It was absolutely beautiful.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to move on to one more community that's near and dear to my heart, and that's my own community of Greenspond, settled back in 1697. I can remember when we first came over and drove the first nail in 1697, moved here. It has Greens

and Ponds; Greenspond after the Greens and Ponds that settled there first. That's history. When you go back to 1697, 200 years after Cabot, people settled on the Northeast Coast in Greenspond. People came from Bonavista, because Greenspond was known as the capital of Bonavista Bay. They came from all the islands.

In the news a couple of weeks ago you would have seen the old courthouse with the mansard roof. In the early 1900s there was a magistrate in the courthouse with a constable. They would take the ferry or the mail boat and go to the different communities and either do small courts or make arrests, bring them back and put them in the jail.

I was in the jail and the hon. Member for St. Barbe behind me; I have a picture of him in the cell. Trust me, the living conditions in those cells were not something anybody would want to go in today. It was about a six-by-eight room with a wooden bunk built there, so you had room to lie down or sit down and that was it. Sometimes they would have 200 people and the door is about four inches thick. I guess like one of the movies – what was it, the (inaudible) redemption.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shawshank.

MR. BRAGG: What was it? *Shawshank Redemption*, where eventually he gets out through and I guess you would have eventually through the door.

My Uncle Reg told me one time when he was a boy the constable caught him. They were bucking somebody's water barrel. That was a word for stealing somebody's water barrel. Well, it was traditionally done around bonfire. As we get closer to November – I have to be honest, Madam Speaker – the urge for a bonfire glows in me because it's a tradition in our community that we've made it a community event for years and years and years. I come from a part of our province that is easy to give up on and say, no, we all need to live in here, but if we don't support our coastal communities, our rural communities, we'd have no history, we'd have nothing to talk about. We've done that.

Madam Speaker, I know my time is getting down. I spent way too much on my district, but

never enough time in my district. This job keeps me in here but it's a district that I truly love to represent, the people I truly love to spend time with. COVID-19 has changed that. COVID-19 has changed the way that you could walk into a coffee shop and sit down with a bunch of people. That opportunity seems to be gone from us now. Going to people's houses is not like it used to be. We do more telephone, more video conferencing.

One of the questions in Estimates was: Can we do more video conferencing? While that may be seem to be the thing to do, to me, to connect with the residents of my district it's to sit there, it's to sit to their kitchen table. To have cheese and crackers or my favourite, dark cake and cheese. I guess if COVID is done – and the Minister of Health said we're going to have to get some vaccines as soon as we can – I think we'll be knocking on the doors because I'm a very social person. I like the interaction with the people in my district.

Madam Speaker, if I could have a couple more minutes. My department is infrastructure and transportation or Transportation and Infrastructure, whichever way you look at it. We've incorporated both bodies, the municipal bodies of the infrastructure with the transportation and the infrastructure needs of the province.

That is done. It was the hon. Member today from – CBS, no, out in that area – Topsail - Paradise asked a question about Route 60. The thing about Route 60 is if we don't replace the infrastructure that's underneath the pavement, the water and sewer lines, the culverts – if we just pave over that we've done a great injustice, we lost a great value.

The project that the hon. Member talked about is a project we could work with the town council on. Many projects like that, in your district, in my district, we would certainly look at the way to – am I getting short on time?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BRAGG: Okay.

It's a great way to do business; it's a great move for us. We're going to spend \$519 million on

infrastructure funding, \$23 million on upgrading existing health care facilities and \$48 million ongoing for the construction of the new schools in Gander, Paradise, St. Alban's and – for some reason, Madam Speaker, I can't remember where the other one is but someone is saying Coley's Point. As you know how important that is to your district, that is a commitment we have to the people of this province. There is \$5.5 million to advance a new correctional facility in St. John's and expand the Labrador Correctional facility in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; \$4.1 million allocated for wharf improvements in Makkovik.

We've heard in this House about the ferry service to the north shore. Well, without a wharf to tie up to the service will be greatly in danger. We'll make improvements of \$4.1 million in Makkovik this year. I'm hoping to get up there, Madam Speaker, in the next few days to tell the people of Makkovik how interested we are and how important it is to keep their community alive.

We're going to do a \$200,000 prefeasibility study of a road to the north. The Combined Councils of Labrador has been asking for this since their incorporation, and they've probably been incorporated for 40 or 50 years. This is something these people have been asking for. We're going to go up and we're going to look at it. I've been told there are already some studies done on this area. There was a mining company interested in this area, so maybe a lot of the work may be done for us, Madam Speaker, but it's what we're committed to do.

We're going to look at \$400,000 as an engineering study for the scope and replacement of the wharf in Lewisporte. That is where I guess you could say we park our boats from time to time. The infrastructure is crumbling. We need an investment there. We're also going to spend \$46.6 million for municipal infrastructure projects relating to water and sewer, roads and paving, municipal facilities, waste management projects and other improvements.

Madam Speaker, I guess I'm right down to the wire on this time right now. I can't say enough of the importance of us investing in our province. We are committed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will stay

committed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we'll make the decisions that help shape the future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Hear, hear to Lumsden Beach!

The hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

There's so much to talk about and so many things to listen to. I find it very educational, actually, sitting in the House listening to the different speeches.

Just looking at this, yesterday was a pretty sombre time for us in our PC caucus, just looking at what was happening to Come By Chance and looking at the fact that people were getting messages about Husky workers being laid off. It was a sombre time to come into the House. Just listening to the questions and answers that were passed across the floor yesterday, just looking at the government ministers respond to our questions on the closing of the Come By Chance Refinery. It was a difficult time for us yesterday, and I know it was the same for the government.

Just looking across Canada and Eastern Canada – actually, my fellow MHA from Labrador, for Lake Melville, was talking about the number of refineries that were closing down across Canada. He's a man for numbers and details, I must say.

The question I was thinking of as I was sitting here listening to people talk, ministers' talk, experienced people ask questions and deliver answers. The one question in my mind was: How many oil refineries do we have in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Speaker? We only have one. What's the contribution to the provincial economy of that oil refinery, which is shut down? The numbers for me, I didn't realize it, what 5 per cent, maybe more, contribution to the economy. How many families are being thrown out of work, 500, 600?

My fellow MHA for Harbour Main was getting messages from at least 30 people, families concerned: What are they going to do now? It was a sombre time yesterday, and I realize we're looking at hard times with the economy.

Looking across the province, also supplies. My fellow MHA for Terra Nova talked about propane. What does all that mean? The thing about it is we have a province to operate. We have a province to run and it's very, very, very important.

Why should that matter to me? My district is so far north, up in the Torngat Mountains. So even little old me, I'm concerned about Come Bay Chance. I'm concerned about the offshore. I'm concerned about Husky workers being laid off. Because you know something, it impacts all of us. It impacts even my district, because my district hasn't gotten what it has deserved since Confederation, I don't think. There's no way that even me, even if I was a part of government would I be able to advocate and get things for my district unless the province starts to do better, and that's something that I realize.

I was listening to the Member talk about his District of Lewisporte - Twillingate yesterday. He talked about the loss of jobs and he talked about the loss of the Labrador ferry, which is near and dear to my heart. I was listening intently to what he was saying, and I know his district is impacted. He spoke with compassion and he talked about the loss of jobs. I think the words he used: It's a slow bleed. I can relate to him.

Just looking at my district now, the loss of the Lewisporte freight ferry is, unfortunately, not a slow bleed. It's basically like having a major artery cut and you're just basically losing a lot of blood. That's what it is for my district because if you look at the food insecurity now with the cost of the freight, it's not doubling, it's not tripling, it's like four times as much.

We look at the price of diesel going up; the freight charges are going to be even more which is going to be added on to the food. It's a huge issue for my district. What impacts the province impacts my district. It's not just about Come By Chance, Husky and just looking at the whole

offshore. For me, I struggle with that because it's just the way I was raised.

Talking about a major loss, a slow bleed, losing the offshore slowly really is deceiving. I actually was trained as an advanced medical responder and I'm also a first-aid instructor. One of the things we always teach people is loss of blood from a major bleed is very, very critical. It needs to be addressed immediately because you only have so much blood and you can only lose so much. After that it's useless. It doesn't matter who shows up to help.

I think that I can use that analogy to the province. The shock to the economy is like having internal bleeding. We had people protest out there on the steps, people begging for their jobs, wanting to know what's going to be done. On the surface we look at it and things don't seem so bad, but all of those job losses are going to come home. How are we going to support them? We're talking about financial, emotional and physical support. It's all related.

I just want to go back to the shock now of losing this. Somebody was saying in our caucus – because it was very sombre yesterday; we were taking it very, very seriously. We were pretty upset. Somebody was saying: The loss of the offshore is on par with the loss of the cod, the impact of the cod moratorium. That's what we're looking at. We're looking at the impact of similar to what happened when we had the cod moratorium.

It kind of made me smile because it brought back memories of John Crosbie. Me and my brother were Liberals. We were big-time Liberals, but I have to tell you my brother is older than me. We were pretty young at the time. I still remember his voice when he talked about John Crosbie and what John Crosbie stepped up to do. My brother was pretty wise because he said John Crosbie is so smart he builds relationships. He built a really good relationship with the prime minister and the Cabinet Members. What did he do? He brought this aid package; he brought support back to the province.

I'm going to tell you now the cod moratorium was two years too late for Labrador, because we lost our codfish a few years before that. We

suffered for a few years before the moratorium was declared and the package came – NCARP first, then TAGS. I remember my brother talking about those relationships and he talked about what John Crosbie did for the province. Do you know something? The way he talked about it was like nobody would listen to Newfoundland and Labrador if it wasn't for John Crosbie. If John Crosbie wasn't there to get the money and have that relationship with Cabinet and the prime minister, we probably wouldn't have gotten it because, in actual fact, who are we?

I'm trying not to be facetious but I can't help it. When John Crosbie stepped up to help the province, he was like the tide. I come from Makkovik. We did a lot of fishing. John Crosbie was like the tide that came in, the tide that rises all boats. John Crosbie came in like the tide and he raised our little province up, not a whole lot but enough for us to survive.

I have to say, to borrow from Senator Lloyd Bentsen, unfortunately Seamus O'Regan is no John Crosbie. I have to say it and I'm going to move on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. EVANS: It's true.

The other thing that's really important to me and also to my district is climate change. We need the province to do well; we need the offshore to do well. We need the revenue from the offshore because that's how we're going to fight climate change. I believe that and I know that my fellow MHA right across from me believes that as well.

Solving climate change and slowing climate change down is going to help our economy. It's kind of like a contradiction. Coming from Makkovik, I was raised by mom, my dad and my grandmother. In our communities we always talked about the land. We had to protect the land; we had to work with the land. We couldn't abuse the land. Going off on the land, coming back from the land. We talked about the land as a separate entity that supported us.

Looking at our offshore – also, I was a big fan of Davis Suzuki – lower emissions. When the fuel from our offshore is consumed, lower emissions than other fuel – a smaller environmental

footprint. It takes less energy to produce our fuel, so that's a win-win. That's why we can actually, in good conscience, support our offshore and still say that by producing through our offshore we're still helping greenhouse gas emissions, because if we don't produce it, somebody else will, some other country will. The thing about it is whoever produces it probably will not have the same footprint. So it's very, very important for us to always lead with that because I have a lot of activist friends, as you can just imagine.

Looking back at that now, I'm going to say it's all tied together. Our province does need a reality check because when we're looking at – we have a lot of unemployment; we have a lot of families struggling. The price on carbon is set to increase. It's already increased to \$30 per ton; it's going up to \$50. It's going to cost the residents more. That's going to be more out of their pockets. We have less jobs; we're going to have more costs. Then, again, we all want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

That's what our kids are being taught in school, that's the messaging to us. We understand that and we want to do our part, but I have to circle back again to fairness. What did the former premier promise us about carbon taxing? We, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, pay the highest carbon tax in Atlantic Canada. Anyone can correct me. I don't mind being corrected if I'm wrong. What I've been told is that New Brunswick hasn't even started paying yet, so where is the fairness for us.

When we asked here about the carbon tax money, it's not earmarked for carbon reduction. We're paying carbon taxes and we're thinking that we're basically sacrificing to stop global warming, but really it's not being earmarked to go back into carbon reduction. Where's the fairness in that?

I'm going to move on. The next thing that's important to me and my district is diesel – a 2.6-cent increase for diesel. Just look at Voisey's Bay now. Up at Voisey's Bay there's no road going north to the nickel mine that produces millions and millions and millions of dollars for the province. Up there they actually have to burn diesel to provide electricity, and they have three tanks up there, 11 million litres each. Voisey's

has storage capacity for 33 million litres of diesel, carbon emitting diesel, carbon emissions.

Not only that, it costs a lot of money for that diesel, to store it, to use it and then they're going to be taxed as they're using it, consuming it. It's a lose, lose, lose situation for Voisey's. Plus, I was working at Voisey's. I was a safety trainer for underground; we're getting ready to go underground. They're saying the 33 million litre capacity is not enough, so we have to build more capacity for diesel consumption. It's going to cost more; carbon tax is going to cost more.

If we had a road when we were supposed to get our road, we would have a power line in there. We'd be able to provide a secure market for Muskrat Falls electricity, so that would have been a win-win. I hope when the prefeasibility study is done and we start looking at the road seriously, we will look at that as well. That's a big factor.

All the communities in my district – we don't have electricity coming into our community, hydroelectricity. We actually have to store diesel, creating huge problems: power generating stations, carbon emissions. We won't even talk about electricity. I just presented a petition on that.

That doesn't mean I'm not grateful for the prefeasibility study. I want to honestly, seriously say that that's a step in the right direction. It's very, very important.

It's important for us to look at – just look at Muskrat Falls now. If Voisey's and the six Indigenous communities on the North Coast could have a power line and have safe, reliable electricity to offset carbon emissions, the people on the North Coast would be able to heat their homes with electricity. We wouldn't have issues of homes being cold. We wouldn't have issues with mould growth because of the uneven heat. We wouldn't have women having to depend on men to haul wood because they can't afford electric heat – that's off the table – and also the cost of stove oil is so expensive. It all ties back to our economy; it all makes sense.

I just want to say, when I presented that petition this morning – whenever that was – this afternoon, I just wanted to say that if you want

to heat your home on the North Coast, you'll probably pay between \$700 and \$1,200. That's a big issue for us. This winter when I was looking at a drum of stove oil – I actually still have the screen captures off the web page of the PUB – a drum of stove oil cost \$100 more in Goose Bay, where they have hydroelectricity coming right to the pole, right to their house, than on the North Coast. When I presented a petition the first time, I talked about widowers using basically all their monies to heat their houses with their furnace or stove oil. That's pretty serious to me.

I also want to mention, too, a few days ago I read a Member's statement. One of the things that people talk to me about is, it was really dark. The first paragraph was really dark. I said: It was dark? I only realized it was dark after it was pointed out to me, because to me the person that I paid tribute to in the Member's statement was always an uplifting, energetic, wise woman who spent a lot of her time teaching how to make sealskin boats, how to make crafts, how to actually take – we call it weaving, but actually it's sewing – the seagrass into art. It's passed down a lot of because of her efforts. What a woman Aunt Jane is. What a wonderful woman.

The thing about it is for my district we have a very, very dark history, where we talk about kids at the age of five and six sent off to residential school to be beaten black and blue, to be starved. But when I sit here, I know that there are houses on the North Coast that are not heated in the winter. I know that there are still children that are just as vulnerable as those little five- and six-year-olds that were sent off to residential schools.

With me, every chance I get I talk about the issues. One of the things that I spend a lot of my time on and a lot of my energy is trying to find ways that when I keep trying to bring up the issues, I won't get tuned out. Because it is negative and it's repetitious, I have to be very, very careful that I'm not just discarded as old news. I think that in this day and age when we talk about vulnerable elders, vulnerable children, low-income families, whether they're on the North Coast or anywhere in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, they have to be a priority.

I think what we're trying to do is say that yesterday was a really sombre day for us. I have to look to my fellow MHAs and say that when we came into the House yesterday, we knew something had to be done. The province has to change. We have to make sure that we can keep our offshore and we have to make sure that the people of Come By Chance oil refinery are looked after. We have to make sure that people who lose their jobs due to COVID are looked after. We all have to work together on that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak to the budget here today and to have the opportunity to follow the Member for Torngat Mountains and the issues that she had raised. I completely agree with her points that we need to have strong urban and rural economies. I had the ability to actually visit her district. I remember being in Nain. When I flew into Nain and I met with President Johannes Lampe, who has been recently re-elected, we talked about a number of issues.

I had the opportunity to visit the Cultural Centre and see the vastness of the land that exists in Torngat Mountains. I think for anybody, unless you go to a place, you never really understand it, unless you talk to somebody. Just even flying in to Nain can be quite an adventure, depending on the type of weather.

I would say that for me I learned a lot on a number of visits. I learned a lot by listening to people here in this Legislature because we are also very passionate about our districts, the people that we represent and the issues. We do have successes as well, as Members of the Assembly.

Being in Nain was very sombre for me as well, very emotional, because it's the place where my father had passed away more than 20 years ago. I have to say that truly very welcoming and I look forward to being able to go back to the

North Coast and to see more and experience more.

I remember being with the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair flying in to Black Tickle and with it having frozen turkeys and chickens and seeing how food is being transported using snowmobiles, and being in another community of Norman Bay while we were waiting to get picked up, because the only transport is helicopter. A snowmobile was slung on the helicopter. The vast difference of being with the Member for Lake Melville going across to Mud Lake and talking to people in Mud Lake after serious challenges that were faced in that community, it's important to hear first-hand.

Being on the South Coast, seeing the hum of activity that happens when the ferry comes in from La Poile or Gaultois and the importance of getting mail or accessing services. Every community, whether it's from Nain to Noddy Bay, we have infrastructure needs; we have social needs. There is a significant balance that must be struck. As all Members of this House, it's important that we work together to find those solutions. One of the great opportunities that I see in this budget in particular is the affordable child care.

Twenty-five-dollar-a-day child care will have such a positive impact on parents and their ability to attach to the workforce. That is so critical. Affordability of child care is important, whether you live in urban or rural communities. I know that as we approach the International Day of the Girl, I spoke to my own sister, who was absolutely ecstatic about this because she has two small children under five. As you talk to a number of people, having affordable child care is a critical pillar. I'm so pleased to see that being in this year's budget.

There are absolutely many needs in every single district, but I think it's absolutely vital – and I'm also pleased to have followed the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I have always said for a number of years – and I've sat here for nine years in this Legislature – that if you invest in advanced telecommunications and advanced transportation networks, you can build a stronger economy because those are key pillars.

The Member opposite talked about roads. I absolutely agree that roads and, as well, a fixed link connecting our Island to the Mainland of the rest of our province, Labrador and Canada is absolutely critical to build that stronger foundation and that economy. We've seen on the Great Northern Peninsula reinvestments in roads and major infrastructure and brush clearing, things that have helped communities, whether it be at the municipal level. That couldn't be done without partnerships, strong collaboration between municipalities, the provincial government and the federal government.

We've been very successful as a government to work with the federal government on historic agreements and major dollars that were leveraged. A number of years ago there were lots of federal dollars that weren't coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. You only have to think about broadband where federal responsibility for broadband, which is regulated through the CRTC – there were federal funds and not a dollar came to Newfoundland and Labrador during the former administration.

With the current administration, under Prime Minister Trudeau, we've seen significant investments in broadband infrastructure. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair talked about the millions of dollars for her district, but we've also seen it on the Great Northern Peninsula and all across this province, seeing communities like Conche and Cook's Harbour recently upgraded. There's innovation that happens in our communities. We've had some people move back to the Great Northern Peninsula and they've had worldly experience in telecommunications.

I would like to highlight Tower Telecom. This is a company, an individual, who worked in the Caribbean and came back with their expertise. They now have a company that is providing faster Internet than the major providers to 22 communities from Sandy Cove to Castor River. These are all communities with populations of 350 or less, and he's providing speeds at 35-megabytes per second. That is a phenomenal speed for a rural community right now. It's not the 50 that the feds have mandated by 2030, but it's far superior to what I'm getting in the community that I currently live and many

communities throughout rural Newfoundland and Labrador and rural Canada. It's a reality.

COVID has shone a light on how we must continue to invest in broadband infrastructure – it's absolutely vital – as well as cellular service. We still have a number of gaps on highways and in major communities, but I was very pleased that this government had created a cellular pilot project. Two towers have been erected on the Great Northern Peninsula in St. Lunaire-Griquet and Raleigh. That's expanded coverage to over 4,000 people on the Great Northern Peninsula where there is tremendous business, but there are opportunities as well for market promotion, tourism and public safety.

In the budget there's funding here to advance public radio and there may be opportunities for further wireless or cellular service. These types of things are extremely positive when it comes to how we can build a smarter knowledge-based economy in both rural and urban areas.

My district is strongly dependent on the fishery. It is the primary employer. I'm pleased to see – as we sat in on the Estimates Committee and the minister answered numerous questions – \$9 million for the Atlantic Fisheries Fund. I was also pleased to see that there was a change of operator where Royal Greenland and Clearwater are now partnering to operate the St. Anthony Seafoods plant which has struggled for a number of years. It has been the provincial government that has had to provide fish plant worker support programs to help these employees maintain the minimum hours for EI; whereas, with this company and this new partnership we should see stronger employment and greater economic prosperity for the St. Anthony area. That's a positive piece.

I've had the opportunity to see what Ocean Choice International is doing in Port au Choix, as well, the berry plant in Anchor Point. Sadly, we saw a plant burn in Black Duck Cove. We need to do more in that community when it comes to industry adjustment and support displaced workers.

We're at a very turbulent time right now in Newfoundland and Labrador, in Canada and across the globe. I was very pleased to see the federal government put forward such quick,

economic responses, as well as our government, with over \$200 million in COVID response. There's additional investment in this year's budget to help small business, to help tourism operators, to help artists, to help people in communities and to help deal with issues that are very pressing and facing our province today in every nook and cranny, especially in oil and gas, in the fishery, in forestry, in small business, in tourism. All communities are facing it.

We are seeing the \$609 million in infrastructure initiatives for road, health care facilities and schools. I've seen where there's been water tanks replaced in communities that haven't seen investment; they're decades old, very well past their useful life in Port au Choix and Port Saunders. It's great to see that today they're starting to dismantle the old one that's over 40 years old.

I've seen some great partnerships in my time here, Mr. Speaker. I saw where the former minister for the Status of Women – in particular in last year's budget, there was investment for the creation of the NorPen Status of Women Council on the Great Northern Peninsula. That is a really positive initiative in partnership with the NorPen Women's Aboriginal Circle. I salute the current minister for continuing funding in this year's budget and the dynamic work that these women are doing. As well as seeing the SEDLER supportive employment outreach for the Great Northern Peninsula; in Port Saunders, the creation of a youth centre.

An e-learning hub partnership between Grenfell and Memorial University and the Status of Women Council and the NorPen Aboriginal Women's Circle, recognizing there may be gaps for broadband. They can't be solved instantaneously, but the community can provide a space for reliable broadband Internet that is much closer in driving distance than having to go all the way out to Corner Brook and to provide a space for people to have access to services.

There has been a unique partnership that's happened with the St. Anthony College of the North Atlantic Campus where the personal care attendant program is offered there, but it's also offered in Port Saunders at the town centre. This is giving people an opportunity in this region,

rather than having to drive more than 2½ hours to travel to get access to education to have it closer to home, because they do have a hospital there at the Rufus Guincharde Centre. They do have personal care homes, long-term care facilities. There is an aging population, so home care becomes an opportunity.

It was great to see investment in the St. Anthony College of the North Atlantic program as well with the practical nursing program and seeing that get off the ground again. When you bring and collaborate community organizations all under one roof, great things happen. I have to commend Mayor Tony Ryan and the Port Saunders town council, government and all people who were involved in this initiative, because it really is something that benefits the entire region.

St. Anthony Basin Resources, Mr. Speaker, they've had their challenges when it comes to quota reductions in offshore shrimp and their royalties, but they've made significant investments for pillars in St. Anthony like cold storage and ensuring that the shrimp plant was built. No different than the success story of the Labrador Fishermen's Union Shrimp Company. It's about giving back to the community and investing in the region.

They took ownership of a former school that was vacant. They've demolished it and removed and cleared the property. A tender was issued. There's water and sewer work that has been done, and now 26 seniors' housing units will be built there on site, next to the hospital, next to a pharmacy, next to other services in town. This is positive. This is a way in which you can grow and provide the right services and create age-friendly towns. The Town of St. Anthony is to be commended for the work they've done.

Mr. Speaker, sadly, I couldn't be in my district yesterday due to flight issues and matters, but there was movement again on looking at establishing an industrial marine base and Arctic gateway for shipping in Crémillière Harbour. This is private sector investment driven completely by the private sector but there are opportunities. Should this come to fruition, Mr. Speaker, this will be very positive for the Great Northern Peninsula. This is what we need to see.

We need to work together to see economic success in rural regions.

I have to take my hat off and give a bow to the tourism operators this year who did operate under some very challenging times, who have changed their operations, who had to adjust, looking at primarily a domestic market and with the Atlantic bubble. There were also operators that newly opened. One of the businesses added a coffee house and another created a unique experience called Moratorium Children, looking at creating experiential experiences and ecotourism in the community of Conche.

Conche has really been a hub of activity and been very important to me, Mr. Speaker. When I went to Conche, I could see there was a real desire and a passion in this community for economic development. We have the French Shore Historical Society with the tapestry, the archeology that's taking place and the French history for tourism.

Cruise ships come to Conche. There's a multi-species fish plant and lots of fishers in the community. There's small business. With that, they didn't have a paved highway for 50 years. It was certainly a commitment to me that I would work as their Member to see the road paved to Conche. This year is the final year and paving should be happening, if not now, rather soon, because the contractors are working on Route 430 and doing much-needed rehabilitation.

Like any district, there's more work that needs to be done. I'm hopeful we'll see work on Route 432 and the completion of 433. There are lots of smaller side roads, whether it be Castor River or Shoal Cove East and Black Duck Cove that also need more work, and the Flowers Cove area, those that are under provincial responsibility. In every community there are significant challenges.

I represent an area that has 60 communities, 16 municipalities, there are 18 fire departments and it's 1½ times the size of Prince Edward Island. Needless to say, I travel quite a bit and spend a significant amount of time on the road. It's 10 hours to get here to St. John's to provide services and to sit here in this Legislature; we have to work really hard.

There are lots of positive things in the budget as well when it comes to attracting new residents in immigration – \$2.1 million. St. Anthony is an area where they've attracted people to become residents here to work in St. Anthony, especially when it comes to health care professionals and specialties. We've seen that.

We've seen where the privatization of the dental services at St. Anthony, Flower's Cove and Roddickton has led to improved services and enhanced specialists coming, like orthodontists, so people now have to travel less. I hope that we use the opportunity through COVID to look at enhancing our telehealth services. We've seen where the Minister of Health and Community Services has made investments and opportunities in 811, where you can get a nurse practitioner by calling that number.

We can enhance the role of nurse practitioners and pharmacists. We've seen where there has been enlargement of scope and opportunities. I have to serenade the minister in many ways for all the work that he's done to enhance health care, provide services and the focus on mental health and addictions. It's so important that we provide these services in communities and continue to do so, and to also see a 20 per cent tax on vaping.

We must take measures to curb unhealthy lifestyles and invest in healthy living. This summer, I've had the opportunity to hike or walk on more than 80 trails or lookouts in my particular district. There's a tremendous opportunity for more ATVing and also we have wonderful snowmobile trails. I've had the opportunity to be in many people's districts this summer. I believe I went to 19 districts fully on the Burin Peninsula, the Bonavista Peninsula, the Avalon and the Great Northern Peninsula. I have a love for this place of Newfoundland and Labrador as much as any one of us here in this Legislature.

We're all here because we want to improve our districts and the quality of life for the people that we represent in each 40 districts and collectively to improve Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe that *Budget 2020: Today. Tomorrow. Together.* certainly does that. It's pleasing to see that from seniors to fire protection, to investment in social programs and supports, that

we're seeing that here in *Budget 2020*. Collaboratively, we work together so that we can continue to solve problems, find solutions and really move forward, because we're going to come out of this situation of COVID-19 where we are facing some challenging times, both fiscally and in some areas of the economy.

We have bright minds here in this Legislature and we have a lot of people outside that are willing to partner and work collaboratively with our government at municipal, provincial, federal levels and internationally to see great success for many years to come. I'm pleased to support *Budget 2020*, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage all my colleagues to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until, Monday, October 19, at 1:30 in the afternoon.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, October 19, at 1:30 p.m.