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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?

Is the Government House Leader ready? Yes, okay.

Third Party and independents ready? Okay.

Admit strangers and begin the broadcast.

Order, please!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Torngat Mountains, Exploits, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Burin - Grand Bank and Humber - Bay of Islands. Virginia Waters - Pleasantville is going to ask for leave to present a Member's statement as well.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I pay tribute to the late Bart Jack Sr. for a lifetime of dedicated service to the Innu of Labrador.

His advocacy for Innu rights began in the 1970s. He witnessed the struggles that his people endured, transitioning from their traditional way of life into the communities of Sheshatshiu and Davis Inlet.

In 1973, Bart Jack became the first president of the first organization of Aboriginal people in this province, the Native Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. He was a strong advocate for justice and education, both essential to the wellness of his people.

He was appointed to the national Parole Board of Canada, bringing changes to the justice system. He studied law to advocate stronger.

Education also was very important to Bart. He wanted Innu children to be able to access education. He also knew it was critical for education to be determined by the Innu themselves. Bart played a large role in

transitioning Innu to their own Innu School Board, on which he served as co-chair.

From low-level flying to protests at Muskrat Falls, Bart Jack voiced his concerns to make sure Innu were treated fairly. Bart has shaped a prosperous future for his people. His leadership will continue to be felt long after his passing.

Please join me today in honouring the late Bart Jack, Innu leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge a long-time volunteer of Norris Arm North, Mr. Pleaman Menchenton.

Mr. Menchenton taught for 32 years in Burlington, Englee, Norris Arm and Norris Arm North. His summer months he worked in sawmills as a carpenter and a logger.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Menchenton was a faithful volunteer for many years. He volunteered with many different committees and boards such as Embalmers and Funeral Directors of Newfoundland, Norris Arm United Church, recreation, War Memorial Committee, volleyball coach, Public Library board, local service district, fire department, town council and Lions Clubs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Mr. Pleaman Menchenton on being a long-time volunteer of Norris Arm North and Norris Arm.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

I would like to recognize a talented friend of mine from Harbour Grace, Michael Power, who is no stranger to the arts community here in our province.

From a young age he participated in music and theatre. Following high school, he was hired by Acting Up Entertainment in Gander. It was during this time when Michael decided he would pursue a professional career in the arts. He enrolled in Sheridan's musical theatre performance program in Ontario, where he trained with some of the country's best performers.

He was employed by Deerhurst Resort, before joining celebrity cruise lines, performing for international audiences. After two years in countries such as Italy, Turkey and Greece, Michael wanted to take his skills and talent back home here to Newfoundland and Labrador. You may have seen him perform on stage with Spirit of Newfoundland and the annual *Revue* sketch comedy produced by Rising Tide Theatre.

In 2012, he was cast as one of the province's favourite musicians, Harry Hibbs. Michael is currently with Terra Bruce Productions which will be touring and featuring the Newfoundland based musical, *No Change in the Weather*.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud of Michael Power's accomplishments and grateful to have him share his talent right here at home in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During COVID-19, all of us developed a strengthened appreciation for essential workers, especially those health care professionals who demonstrate their commitment to their fellow citizens during a very, very difficult time. But one young boy from Burin, in my District of Burin - Grand Bank, came up with his own unique way of paying homage to the women and men who daily risk their own safety to protect our health.

For 77 consecutive days, eight-year-old Andrew Billard would set up his drums on his deck at the very time many essential workers were headed

home for the day. He beat those drums loudly, Mr. Speaker, reminding those workers they were much appreciated. It also served as a reminder to other residents of Burin that those special workers had just completed another day of being there for the rest of us should the need arise.

I know his parents Shauna and Ryan Billard, as well as his sister Emily, and his grandparents Ian and Jeanien Edwards and Mike and Judy Billard are very, very proud of Andrew.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Andrew for this thoughtful act in support of essential workers. They certainly deserve our unanimous support.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I recently attended the ordination service for The Reverend Deacon Karen Loder of Summerside, who was ordained by Bishop John Organ, and will now serve as deacon for the parish of Meadows which includes the Anglican churches in Summerside, Meadows and Gillams.

Reverend Deacon Karen has been a long-time volunteer with her church and her community. Her faith and dedication to her church spans over many years including as a member of the Anglican Church Women and a lay reader with St. Paul's Anglican Church.

She has a certificate in pastoral and palliative care, and in May of this year, she obtained her associate in theology diploma and a diploma in theology and ministry and is currently working towards her bachelor of theology degree from Queen's College.

Whether it was during her career as a social assistant worker or her involvement with community groups such as the Summerside 4-H Rockets, the Northshore Qalipu Mi'kmaq and others, Reverend Karen's commitment to her community and to her faith has never been unwavering.

I ask all Members to join me in recognizing Reverend Deacon Karen for her contribution to her community and wish her well in all her future endeavours helping people out.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With leave of my colleagues, I would like to deliver a Member's statement today.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge one of my constituents, Mr. Bill Jeffery, for his perseverance and tenacity in promoting mental health, particularly men's mental health.

Through his advocacy and anti-stigma efforts, Mr. Jeffery turned personal adversity into public advocacy for men's mental health.

Amongst his goals to see was a men's resource centre established in Newfoundland and Labrador to offer a safe place for men to seek help and access mental health services.

A talented singer and songwriter, he wrote and recorded the powerful "The Lonely Man" to promote his message.

Not only has the song struck a chord, it is an anthem for families of men with mental illness. It remains in the top 10 of the East Coast Top 30, spending six weeks at number one.

Mr. Jeffery left his 10-year career in the IT sector, earning a master's degree in counselling psychology from Memorial University. He's asking people to support his effort and The Lonely Man Project by sharing his song and keeping the conversation going.

I ask all hon. Members in this House of Assembly to join me in celebrating his efforts

and recognize his dedication to enhancing the help and access for mental health services in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, our province is enjoying a steady increase in fruit and vegetable self-sufficiency from 10 per cent to nearly 15 per cent since 2017.

This is great progress – and with farmers growing more food, we need to ensure they have somewhere to store it, and a chance to sell it, not just at harvest time, but all year-round.

Mr. Speaker, my department recently announced \$1.25 million for farmers to build vegetable cold storage facilities to help them increase production, extend marketing periods, improve vegetable quality and – as always – support food self-sufficiency.

Southwestern Newfoundland Farmers Group Limited is receiving \$750,000 in provincial funding to establish a new vegetable storage and secondary processing facility in Robinsons. I had the pleasure of meeting Louis MacDonald in the Speaker's own District of St. George's - Humber on the day first concrete was poured at the new facility. Mr. MacDonald and his partners are doing fantastic work building this sector and creating long-term, year-round jobs in their region.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in Labrador, Spruce Meadow Farms near Happy Valley-Goose Bay is receiving nearly \$500,000 in provincial and federal funding to build a cold storage and packaging facility. The Member for Lake Melville and the MP for Labrador recently visited the site with farmer Tom Angiers and clearly saw that a vegetable cold storage facility will be a game changer for the region.

With this infrastructure in place, Mr. Angiers and local farmers can plant more crops, overwinter more vegetables, use more land and ensure a local, long-term, sustainable vegetable supply for Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank these farmers for their vision, and I look forward to helping them find more innovative ways to focus on what they do best – growing and producing nutritious, healthy food right here at home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: I thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, food self-sufficiency is a very important issue in our province. This has certainly been highlighted this year through impacts of Snowmageddon and COVID-19. It is positive to see increasing the number of cold storage facilities and expanded access for farmers to vegetables. This will hopefully increase food self-sufficiency while having added benefit of providing producers with an opportunity to sell their vegetables year-round.

Mr. Speaker, this important and valuable sustainable vegetable supply throughout our entire province cannot be overstated. We wish all those involved a bountiful harvest and great success.

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 thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

My grandfather was a farmer and I remember his root cellar and how important that was to store vegetables for use throughout the year, especially since refrigeration wasn't an option.

Also, I came to realize I was more in love with the idea of farming than farming itself.

Vegetable cold storage facilities are essential if our local farmers are to increase production and capacity and if our province is to achieve food self-sufficiency, so this is indeed a good announcement. However, if there is one suggestion it's to make sure that small, independent farmers who sometimes feel left out that they are eligible to avail of such initiatives and to increase their production as well; more support for small famers.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since COVID-19 has changed our lives, active living has become even more important, and encouraging people to live healthier lifestyles is a priority for our government. Active residents lead to stronger, healthier, happier and safer communities and they create positive and everlasting experiences.

This is why our government recently announced a multi-million dollar investment to upgrade and connect the trail system to a continuous 4.8-kilometre active transportation route in St. John's.

Once complete, residents will benefit from the multi-purpose path that will connect different neighbourhoods and connect the east and west ends of St. John's.

Mr. Speaker, we also recently announced over \$2 million for the COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Sport. This funding will help maintain jobs, support business continuity and provide short-term operational viability for sport and recreation organizations across the entire province.

Sports facilities are important hubs for our communities. They provide inclusive places to gather and connect, while promoting active and healthy lifestyles. For that reason, last week our government proudly contributed to a new sport multiplex facility in the Town of Gander, which includes a FIFA regulation-sized outdoor soccer field and an eight-lane 400-metre rubberized running track.

This is in addition to the necessary investments our government provided to support community arenas and pools throughout the province, including assisting with the financial shortfall facing The Works, which houses the Aquarena. I had the fortune of being at the facility last week with the Premier when the doors re-opened, to see the excitement and smiles on the faces of so many athletes as they got back into the water.

And late last week, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology released the country's first ever 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults. The new guidelines outline what adults should do daily to help achieve health benefits and help show what a healthy 24 hours looks like when it comes to physical activity, sedentary behaviours and sleep.

Mr. Speaker, as we manoeuvre into the new normal of living with COVID-19, let's keep in mind how being active and on the move is so important to our overall health and well-being.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Like the minister said, COVID-19 has changed our lives, now more than ever. We must find alternative ways to stay active to ensure we have a healthy lifestyle both physically and mentally.

It was great to see the government announce \$2 million for the COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Sport. This will allow community-based sport and recreation groups to continue

their programming and keep our young and old alike very active.

There must be more done to ensure our aging facilities are maintained and modernized, so further investments in new infrastructure are needed to properly train our province's athletes.

We need our youth to be more involved in recreation and sport activities on a daily basis to ensure they are on a path of long life, physical activity and wellness. It is important for the government to keep investing in sport and recreation in our province to ensure all residents have access to high-quality programs and facilities as we manoeuvre into a new normal with COVID-19.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Investment in community activities and recreation is always a great benefit. The balance of work life and home life is very important. Community recreation helps with the physical and mental health in this balance.

As we navigate with COVID, it's even more important now. I hope to see the government maintain this funding for municipalities into the future so they can continue to enrich communities, and by providing a balance of activities and recreation across this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased today to recognize October 19-25 as Waste Reduction Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Multi-Materials Stewardship Board will be celebrating Waste Reduction Week through a digital public awareness campaign aligned with theme day, as well as online composting workshops for the public. Government House will also be lit in blue and green tomorrow, October 21, in recognition of Waste Reduction Week.

Mr. Speaker, we all play a part as environmental stewards in protecting our environment and encourage each other to start new habits as we consider potential alternatives to advance waste reduction. With the retail plastic bag ban now in effect in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are effectively decreasing the amount of plastic waste and litter created, thereby protecting the environment and improving the waste management system.

My department and the MMSB are also actively working through the recommendations made in the Provincial Solid Waste Management Strategy report released earlier this year. The report recommends major changes and we are analyzing the contents to make thoughtful and prudent decisions.

The provincial government and the MMSB encourage individuals, businesses and schools throughout the province to celebrate Waste Reduction Week in Canada. The MMSB Rethink Waste NL website contains valuable tips and resources that highlight waste reduction initiatives and information that the public can use to reduce waste in our province. I encourage all residents to reflect on lifelong positive changes they can make during Waste Reduction Week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: I thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We, the Official Opposition, are pleased to recognize Waste Reduction Week and fully support efforts to increase awareness about reducing waste in our province.

Implementing the single-use plastic bag ban was a positive step, Mr. Speaker, but there is much more to be done. We should be looking for innovative ways to reuse our recyclable materials and we have to find additional uses for our waste here in our own province. We encourage government to examine this further and to support new ideas and solutions.

Mr. Speaker, we hope the principles of Waste Reduction Week are embraced all year-round. Please put waste in its proper place, celebrate and protect our environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I also join him in celebrating Waste Reduction Week and applaud initiatives such as the digital public awareness campaign, online composting workshops and lighting Government House in blue and green to raise awareness of this issue; however, we do have to go further. That's a good first step, everything we've done.

We've made progress, but there are other ideas that we can use to reduce waste that still ends up in the trash: glass bottles, in terms of aggregate; better use of our discarded tires; initiatives that could also create industry here within this province.

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, yesterday, the minister referred to my question, in which I referred to the federal offshore support money as hush money, as ridiculous. I stated to the House that hush money is money which is inadequate to the task and intended to keep people quiet.

Does the minister really believe, contrary to what his government has been saying since March, that \$320 million is adequate to the need to put jobless offshore workers back to work or is the hush money keeping him quiet?

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

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

Sorry, again, there's a term that comes to my head, but I don't want to say it in fear of upsetting the Member again.

He said that hush money is money which is inadequate to the need and intended mainly to keep people quiet. If you look at the Cambridge definition, it's "money that is given to someone to ... keep something secret." The fact is that there were all kinds of publicity, news releases. I think there might have even been an announcement that went on about this.

Again, I say to the Member: If you want to get on with semantics and stuff like that, that's fine. I would rather that you ask questions that are actually constructive and can help us deal with this issue that we all face.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I'm glad the government mentioned keep a secret because that's exactly what they're trying to do, the secret being that these monies are wholly inadequate to the task of returning workers to their jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: A little history lesson, Mr. Speaker: During the 2008 to 2010 financial crisis, Canada provided bailouts of \$13.7 billion to GM and Chrysler and, over time, another \$1.1 billion to Bombardier, \$3.3 billion to Pratt & Whitney and we could go on. That was to preserve the industrial-based jobs in Ontario and Quebec.

Will the government publicly demand that their fellow Liberals in Ottawa give similar dramatic support to preserve industrial-based jobs at Come By Chance?

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

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

A couple of points I'll make in reference to the question that the Member made. Number one: We've gone on record on multiple occasions telling Ottawa that we need them to be a part of this solution here. My predecessor has written multiple letters on that.

Number two: If we want to make this a federal issue, I could point out that a prominent Conservative Member and former Cabinet minister, Pierre Poilievre, said giving money to industry is a loser bet. If we want to make it federal, that's fine.

What I would again say to the Member is that we're dealing with an issue which is global in nature and for which we are doing absolutely everything we can. I am very thankful that we have a 21-member task force made up of industry experts from all the different fields that are going to come together and help us to deal with the issues that we face.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, by referring to positions taken in the past by this government, the minister has in fact confirmed

what I said, that their present position is contrary to all their past positions.

When WestJet announced major service cuts following other cuts by Air Canada, the four Atlantic premiers issued a news release praising the Trudeau government for their leadership on air access and their promise of subsidies.

Has this government talked with Ottawa to determine whether it will subsidize WestJet and Air Canada to prevent service cuts and restore services?

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

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

I'm happy to answer this, although there are a number of us on this side that were ready to get up and answer. Literally, just before the House started, we got off a call where we met with all the different airport authorities in this province, whether it be Stephenville, Gander, Deer Lake, St. John's and Happy Valley-Goose Bay. There was the Minister of Finance, the Premier, the Minister for TCAR, myself and all the stuff that we talked about. We realize that there are issues coming.

What I can say is that even though we have spoken to the feds – they indicated that, too. They, too, had recently spoken to the feds and they feel that there's a positive resolution coming to this huge issue, which I would point out is, again, global in nature and one that could have a dramatic effect on this province here.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I believe I just heard the minister say that the government realized this issue was coming and therefore got on the phone today? Our province has been losing vital air routes to centres like Halifax for a long time now. In a five-year period, the government eliminated the dedicated position,

director of air access, and failed to develop any air access strategy to grow opportunity and jobs.

Is lack of an air access strategy costing us jobs and economic development?

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

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

Yes, today was the first call we've ever had with the airline industry when it comes to this matter. What I would say to the Member opposite is we have been dealing with this since March – March we've been dealing with this. Today, what I mentioned is that we just had another call.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. A. PARSONS: I would say to the Members opposite, please let me finish my answer if you actually want it.

What I would say is that we are facing an issue that we realize is global in nature. Certainly, nationally here we realize the fact of what COVID has done to this industry when it comes to the restrictions that are placed on every province and every country.

What we are going to do is we've said to them they are the subject matter experts. We will work with them the best way we can to deal with this issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the minister opposite say that he started dealing with the air access issue in March. In the Mills's report, which was supposed to help the government get the economy kick-started, which was handed in in July, Mills said: "Air access is considered to be a long-standing issue" – not a recent one – "that constrains economic development across sectors.... This will be a

particular challenge for rural Newfoundland and Labrador.”

Now, the budget did not contain an air access strategy for economic development and jobs. Is the government waiting for another task force report next year before it takes action?

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

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

Yes, there is a competition to answer this. Everybody here wants to stand up and point out some of the fallacies in the question that you just asked. Now, I would say to the Member, you can continue to split hairs when it comes to this issue.

One thing I will point out, you mentioned, because I lived there, is that we realize the challenges that we face in rural Newfoundland when it comes to air access. We realize it's a provincial issue, but it's one that I live every week when I'm getting back and forth. It's one that we faced in this province for decades now – decades. Again, this year has been probably the most difficult, given the fact that we have a worldwide pandemic that has slammed the airline industry. We have met with them and we've done what we can.

As it relates to the budget, I would say to the Member, if it's something that greatly offends you then I would look forward to your vote on said budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm called upon by my responsibilities to remark on the absence of a government air access strategy. This is not a new thing. It's in black and white in the Mills's report. Perhaps the minister has never read it.

Right now, NAV CAN has slashed jobs across the country and we're hearing that major layoffs

are coming, or maybe have happened, at the air traffic control centre in Gander, which stepped up in 9/11 and welcomed the world to our province.

Has the government taken specific action to protect jobs related to the province's airports? Or is it the government's policy that if you're from away you should stay away?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, that is atrocious to say that this government is not working towards jobs, is not working towards air access and is not working towards anything. I think it is atrocious.

I think the Member opposite, as well as every person in this province, knows that we are in the middle of a global pandemic. There are global issues at play. This government has worked very, very diligently over the last number of months to assist where we can, where we possibly can with tourism, where we possibly can with air access.

He refers to the Mills's report. It was this government who brought Mr. Mills in to do work with this government on jobs and economic development.

Mr. Speaker, I will say to the Member opposite, there's an old Chinese proverb: The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person who's doing it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, what's atrocious is the lack of a plan.

Mr. Speaker, work on the TCH at Thomas Pond was shut down for months over the summer due to an apparent shortage of liquid asphalt. This, despite the fact that other suppliers had the product on hand.

How can the minister defend an unnecessary lane closure and massive inconvenience to motorists and commercial traffic for months?

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

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

I thank the Member opposite for the question. The Member opposite who came from a world of asphalt industry, he told me in the Estimates here three weeks ago, would know full well the dealings that happen on this. I think he's referring to – I could be incorrect here – the bridge work that is being carried out. There are several layers of that that needs to be done. There's a sealer that needs to go over the actual concrete base. That has to dry and then there has to be a Kevlar material that goes into it.

The supplier in which the contractor was dealing with at the time had a shortage. I think that has since been rectified, and hopefully very soon we'll get the traffic flowing. It was never completely closed, Mr. Speaker, it was reduced speed. We did not actually have the road dug right up. There was no diversion of traffic. You just reduced from 100 down to 50 kilometres, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite does know what he's talking about. When he asked the department if there was liquid asphalt, they didn't know; they hadn't reached out to anyone.

Mr. Speaker, just last week there was significant lane closures on the Outer Ring Road, Route 2, Pitts Memorial Drive, Conception Bay Highway and the TCH, all at the same time.

Why does the minister's department lack any planning or coordination on these major provincial highway projects?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, is the hon. Member suggesting we do no maintenance to our highways and let them deteriorate to a point that

they're unsafe? Our priority is safe roads for the people of this province to travel on, and we will stand by it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: If safety was a priority, Mr. Speaker, they'd have the tools in place to complete the work once they started.

Mr. Speaker, we learned in Estimates that Transportation and Infrastructure have a critical shortage of heavy equipment technicians, 25 in total.

As winter months quickly approach, what is the minister's plan to ensure we have adequate staff to keep our fleet of snow clearing equipment on the road?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, a great question from the Member opposite. The Member opposite is talking about work for this province. We're looking for workers in this province to fill the jobs in this province. So if the Member opposite knows of any technicians that are available to work in this province – he has a full list of résumés, forward them to my office and I'll see that they'll find a job somewhere in our department, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Obviously, once again, Mr. Speaker, this government has no plan. Can't even hire technicians.

Mr. Speaker, due to continued staffing shortages, the department has had to rely on private contractors to do this work at a significantly increased cost.

Has the department engaged the College of North Atlantic Centre of Excellence in Bay St. George to recruit new candidates for these jobs?

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I can't help but say it. The Member opposite stands up week after week talking about 100 per cent employment for this province. We are attempting, making all attempts to bring people in to work. If the Member opposite or any Member in this House or anybody who's listening knows of a technician that is looking for work in this province, they should send a résumé to our office, because we would love to fill these positions.

While we have a shortage of technicians, if people do not apply for the jobs we will farm out the work, because we need safe machinery on our highways.

I make no apology for going to a garage to get a piece of heavy equipment fixed so it can plow our roads and maintain our roads, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, replacing machinery doesn't accommodate for fixing it and having it prepared for the winter.

Mr. Speaker, the former minister of Transportation and Infrastructure spent over \$12.6 million on paving in his own district, a staggering increase of 854 per cent. Now, the current minister has moved paving machines into his district. All you have to do is look at social media to see pictures of the new blacktop being laid.

In my district there's a town called Terra Nova. The minister's department has suggested to me that instead of replacing the blacktop, they tear it up and maintain it as a gravel road.

Why does the minister's district get such preferential treatment?

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

MR. BRAGG: I don't know if I should laugh or cry at the question, Mr. Speaker. I have to be honest; I make no apology for the work that goes on throughout this province. Every week I drive the Trans-Canada Highway from Gambo to St. John's. There's work ongoing throughout this province.

This summer I drove to the Trans-Labrador Highway, in which the next two construction seasons we will have completed with blacktop.

I make no apology for the work that's ongoing, Mr. Speaker. To this day, we are paving in this province; where possible, we are paving this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARROTT: So do you have to be a minister to get paving done in your district?

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

MR. BRAGG: I ask honestly how many people in this House are having paving done in their district right now? I'll assume you're all ministers because I know in all 40 districts there are about 35 that are being done, actively.

Some are centre city. They have none. Anybody else, there are active applications going on within the last three or four years. There has been, Mr. Speaker.

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 all of the numbers –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. WAKEHAM: – being thrown out about paving, so I would think that the minister will have no trouble coming up with \$200,000 to pave Cold Brook Road.

I would like to go on to ask, though, over the summer there were a bunch of cut-outs that appeared in our district on Route 460 and the roads going from Kippens to Port au Port East into Port au Port West. That was earlier this summer. It's now the middle of October and there's still nothing done with them. Cutting up a road, throwing up a few signs and leaving town for three months is just not acceptable.

I'd ask the minister what the plan is to get this fixed immediately.

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

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

I'm not fortunate enough to be able to fly the roads every single day to see the condition of the roads, but I will consult with the departments in that district to see if there's been something that has been left undone that should have been done. If there have been culverts installed and pavement not put back, there must be a reason for it.

Maybe there's not an asphalt plant in the area. I wouldn't know for sure, but I would like for the hon. Member, after Question Period, to reach out to me to explain where the places are.

Lots of time, Mr. Speaker, I get a picture of a pothole and that could be taken – we have 10,000 kilometres of road, I can't go looking for that one pothole. I would like to know if there's somewhere that anybody has in their district, reach out to me after Question Period and I'll work with the depot to see if we can get some work done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the invitation and I look forward to talking to him about Cold Brook again.

Dame Moya Greene was originally appointed to develop an economic recovery plan and to create jobs for our province. In the budget we were told she's going to reimagine government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people in my region aren't talking to me about reimagining government, they're talking to me about jobs. They're talking about paying their bills. They're talking about paying their mortgages.

I ask the minister: What exactly is Ms. Greene being called to do and when will we see the terms of reference?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think throughout the Budget Speech you'll see a tremendous emphasis on creating economic development and job opportunities in the province. We have investments in the technology sector, investments in the fishing sector, investments in agriculture and aquaculture, in mining, in oil and gas, all of them outlined in the Budget Speech, Mr. Speaker. If the Member opposite is not quite sure where the emphasis of this government is, which is on jobs, jobs, jobs, then I'll be happy to walk him through the budget.

Regarding Dame Moya Greene, we're very pleased to have someone of her calibre working with government to look at the fiscal and financial situation, the economics opportunities and the economic recovery of this province. Her terms of reference will be imminently made available to the public and I'll make sure it's tabled here in the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that her emphasis is on jobs, jobs, jobs, just like ours, but her own budget documents referred to job losses of over 13,000. Since that time, the Come By Chance sale has broken down; the Terra Nova is floating without workers; West White Rose may be cancelled; there have been layoffs at Husky, Terra Nova, Transocean, many engineering firms, airlines. Small business is still closed. By my own count, that adds up to about 3,000 jobs, so jobs, jobs, jobs may be their mandate, but this adds up to over 16,000 jobs being lost.

Again, I ask: When will we see the plan?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, I want to take the opportunity to speak to the Member because all the points he brings up are serious in nature when we talk about workers facing loss of employment at places like Come By Chance and Husky. We realize that's serious.

A couple things I will say is that, again, we realize that this is driven worldwide. In fact, we've seen huge cutbacks all over this globe. When I talk about the fact that Calgary has a higher unemployment rate than Newfoundland and Labrador, you can see that's not an issue here. It's driven by a pandemic. That's one thing I will say.

There is a ray of hope. I just got off a panel today run by techNL with different people, like Genoa Design and Other Ocean, Beep Ayre. We talked about the thousands of jobs that can come from a tech sector. I look forward to taking the innovation from these people and spreading it across this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Terra Nova is sitting idly in Bull Arm, while Suncor decides what to do next. Workers are waiting to go to work on this vessel.

Minister: Can you confirm or assure the public that these workers will have work available, and is the refit going to take place in this province?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: As I've said in numerous calls with different officials that I've spoken to over the last number of months, including a call, actually, that I had with a union this morning. I certainly can't give any assurance that I don't know is guaranteed. I don't think that's what workers want. I don't think that's what anyone wants.

What I can tell them is that we're doing everything within our power. In fact, we'll be meeting again with Suncor this afternoon. At the end of the day, this is a commercial transaction that they're doing.

One thing we do have, though, is that we have a group of very bright minds – I know there's some disparagement on the other side about the task force made up of industry experts, but we're willing to work with them, take \$320 million and pull whatever levers we have at our disposal in order to get these people back to work because I know that's what we all want.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, will you make that your number one priority to get those workers back on that refit? I know it's fine and I know we agree on this, but I think that needs to be your number one priority because that industry is really hurting, as we all know, and I think we need to start taking a stronger stand.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: While I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, the Member's concern here, and I share it, I don't think it would be fair to anybody that we have seen devastated by this oil industry upheaval that we have, whether it's the people that right now are wondering about the refinery, whether it's the people at Husky, whether it's those with Suncor. I think I'm treating them all equally, and that we want to help in whatever way we can to get them all back to work. I won't put myself into a situation where we prioritize one over the other.

What I say is that we have a department – the people behind the scenes that we don't see here in the House, and myself – working tirelessly around the clock to try to come up with solutions, working with the different players and we'll continue to do so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, we still have no firm commitment from government to employ the thousands of skilled workers that call Newfoundland and Labrador their home. Minister, you and your government have an ability to fix this problem by assuring the refit of Terra Nova starts immediately.

I ask: Why are you and government failing the residents who are waiting to go back to work?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would just remind anybody out there that's listening, that this is not a government decision. We are dealing with private companies. That's the reality here. If it was as easy as flicking a switch or signing a piece of paper, government would have done that a long time ago but that's just not how it works. We have benefits agreements in place. We have other things that we must abide by.

What I can say, again, is that we are doing what we can. I have to tell you, when I'm speaking to people in the union – in fact, the one call I had this morning when I was dealing, actually, with Come By Chance, is that they appreciate the hard work we're putting into it. They realize that we didn't cause the price of oil to go to \$40. They realize that we didn't cause COVID, but they do realize that we are trying our best and we're going to do everything in our power to make them get back to work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the Minister of Finance said that our elected officials could have input into their task forces. The minister said they are always open to input from MHAs; however, the Liberal government has ceased meetings on the all-party Committee on education and their joint COVID task force has died on the vine.

I ask the minister to clarify, given the disappointing track record this fall, will we, the elected officials of this province, truly be given an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the newly announced task force, and how?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

It is, I think, outstanding that this government has reached out across all parties and has created a mechanism for everyone to be involved in the pandemic, to be involved in the decisions around the pandemic. I can tell you I was involved in, I could say, almost – well, it was daily meetings in the beginning of the pandemic, throughout the last number of months – eight months, Mr. Speaker.

Then when it became time for school, we reached out again. I had an all-party Committee to work with the Minister of Education on making sure we had a safe return to school. I think the minister did an outstanding job, and I

commend the Committee for all their hard work because going back to school safely was very, very important to everybody in this province. I think we've been very successful.

Just as we've done those collective efforts, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the Member opposite, any information that she would like to bring forward on the development and efforts of economic and financial development in this province, my eyes and ears are open to her.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity.

I will provide the minister with a number of ways in which my party, as well as I'm sure the other Members here, would like to contribute to those task forces.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked the Minister of Finance if the Liberal government would respect the motion passed in this House for there to be no election called this year. Instead of an answer, the minister deferred to the letter of the law. We are the elected representatives of the people of this province.

Again, I ask the minister: Will the Liberal government respect the legal motion of the elected representatives of the people of this province and not call a general election in 2020?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: I will say again today, Mr. Speaker, that the only people speaking about an election are the Opposition. Repeatedly speaking about an election, preparing for an election.

I will say it's incumbent upon government to follow the letter of the law in this province. There is a legal responsibility that we have. There is legislation in the books that has been there since, I think, the early 2000s and we will be, again, responsible and follow the letter of the

law, the legislation that was duly passed and implemented by this House.

Thank you.

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of CSSD: How are we measuring the effectiveness and impact of social programming meant to help Indigenous youth in care?

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, we have a bunch of things that we do as a department to measure what we do with persons in care.

We'll come out and say right away that there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care, and we understand that. That's not only an issue here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, that's an issue throughout the country. We are committed to working with the Indigenous communities here in Newfoundland and Labrador to come up with solutions for this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Time for a quick question and a quick answer.

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

Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear from early childhood educators across the province that they are an afterthought, that child care operators say they cannot offer living wages to their staff, saying the money isn't in their budget.

I ask the Minister of Education: How will the Liberal government ensure that the early childhood education system is able to attract and retain quality childhood educators that are paid a

living wage for the valuable skills they offer to the development of our children?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the last three years our government has increased the wage subsidy for early childhood educators significantly. We've also increased the bursaries for training for early childhood educators. The wage subsidy amounts to \$6, maybe \$8 an hour in some cases, additional pay.

I understand and I realize that there are still challenges in some areas of the province, Mr. Speaker, and we are working with early childhood education operators to try and address those issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

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

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to table the report of the Social Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the following departments: the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development; Education; Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities; Health and Community Services; Justice and Public Safety; and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

I'd like to thank the ministers and their staff for their attendance. Some people describe

Estimates as a challenging time. I'm sure it is because you need to be ready; you need be ready with good answers, but it's a great way to understand the workings of government, particularly in each of those departments.

I'd also like to thank my fellow colleagues from this House who share the Committee with me. I Chaired as the Member for Lake Melville. I'd also like to thank the MHAs representing the Districts of Bonavista, Burin - Grand Bank, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Harbour Main, Placentia - St. Mary's, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows and St. John's Centre, as well as those who subbed in, sometimes on short notice, so that we could accommodate these Estimates and keep our schedules.

Mr. Speaker, with that I will table this on this 20th day of October 2020.

(Baby cooing.)

MR. TRIMPER: That's the first competition with Alexander. I'm pleased to hear that. Hopefully *Hansard* captured that.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further reports by Standing and Select Committees?

The hon. Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my role as Chair of the Resource Committee, I am pleased to advise the Resource Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture; the Department of Immigration, Skills and Labour; the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology; and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

I certainly would like to thank the ministers and all their officials that attended. We know how important the province's resources are, and there were certainly robust discussion and questioning in the Estimates. Some went very late into the

evening but I certainly enjoyed and appreciated the co-operation from all Members for participating.

I'd like to thank the Committee Members, Mr. Speaker: the Member for Burin - Grand Bank; Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans; Harbour Grace - Port de Grave; Labrador West who served as Vice-Chair; Lake Melville; Placentia - St. Mary's; myself, the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows; and the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

I'd also like to recognize the Table Officers and certainly show appreciation to any Member here in the Assembly who assisted to fill in when Members of the Committee were busy with other House of Assembly duties.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit the report of the Resource Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further reports by Standing and Select Committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That, notwithstanding the time limit prescribed in Standing Order 71, when this House reviews the 2020-2021 Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council in Committee of Supply, that the time allocated to that review shall be no more than 2½ hours.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS many students within our province depend on school busing for transportation to and from school each day; and

WHEREAS there are many parents of school-aged children throughout the province who live inside the eastern school district's 1.6-km zone, therefore do not qualify for busing; and

WHEREAS policy cannot override the safety of our children;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to eliminate the 1.6-kilometre policy for all elementary schools in the province and in junior and senior high schools where safety is a primary concern.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I presented a petition on 1.6-kilometre busing and it probably won't be the last, I guess. I've obviously not presented one in recent months or recent sittings because of the COVID situation and the Return to School Plan and the lack of buses and everything else. As the minister stated yesterday, all eligible children now have a ride to school and they're working on courtesy requests for other children, which would be children that are within this 1.6-kilometre zone. That's fine, and I was aware of that myself, dealing with schools in my district.

The bigger thing is all children should be eligible, not just the children that are outside the 1.6. All children should be eligible, unless you're literally in the backyard of a school.

When I presented this petition – and I've presented it in many ways, many forms. I've been colourful; I've been sombre. I've been every temperament, but one thing I've always done and I've always committed to the parents and the children, too, in my district is that I support them and I always have supported them. People can criticize me, and other ministers of the department I've spoke to on it as well. I've never wavered on this issue. I've never wavered and I will not waver. That's who I am.

The safety of a child – we look at seniors and there's a paramount importance to this Legislature, to the people of this province, is to protect our seniors, is to protect the vulnerable. Children are the same. I'm not asking across the board. When you listen to that petition, I said – and I've pleaded with the former minister as well. I think we can be creative. You don't have to have it in every school if it's not required. Throw it out there to try and endeavour to do it in elementary schools, but they are your most vulnerable children. The K to 6 are the most vulnerable population.

Actually, in junior and senior high, I know in my district I have a heavily populated school. As the minister would be aware, all schools are pretty well full. Junior and senior high is not an issue so much because they get rides with their friends and they're walking, they have less concerns. The most vulnerable, K to 6 children are – there's a valid concern. I don't have sidewalks; I don't have public transit – as a lot of Members don't. I know this doesn't affect every district in the province. That's probably why I've had so much trouble making headway with this petition and this issue.

It's something I believe in; it's something I will not give up on. It's something that I just renew my call, and it's not a new thing to Members opposite. A lot of my colleagues, we present this petition in unison, because our party and our Blue Book committed to changing this policy because it's not fair. When I say not fair, it's not going to break the bank either, because we're looking probably millions – there is no real proper cost estimate actually done on this, but whatever it is, you can't put a price tag on the safety of a child. Full stop there, that's where it needs to be. We really need to look at this issue

because, like I said, policy cannot override safety.

Thank you very much, 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.

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with some 444 signatures regarding the permit to alter a body of water issued by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities to Ocean Choice International to allow the infilling of up to 2.5 hectares of Long Pond Harbour in the Town of Conception Bay South. They are calling upon the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to suspend the permit and require a comprehensive environmental assessment to be completed.

Now, I've presented similar petitions on other issues similar to this and the concern of these people has to do with the fact that an environmental assessment was not required prior to issuing the permit, and they believe it should've been part of that. Long Pond is an estuary environment. The public – this is the big issue – the public has concerns about this and that they were not adequately notified of the project, therefore unable to express concern.

The public notification letters were not sent to residents until September 18, which is the same date as the permit to alter the body of water was issued by the department. So they do have a number of concerns, and we can see here that in the news recently we know that that permit has been suspended by the navigable waters. Also, again, that OCI is presenting another plan, but it's still going to come down to an adequate process.

Red tape to one person basically means it's protections for other groups of people and for the environment. What we're asking, what these citizens are asking, Mr. Speaker, is that we do due diligence. That before we start altering the environment permanently that we start looking at the impact and listen to the concerns of

citizens and those who have a vested interest in that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BENNETT: I would like to thank the Member for the petition.

Our department and I have taken the opportunity to meet with the Advocates for the Responsible Development of Long Pond, along with the company and town representatives. The project was first put through a request for environmental assessment back in September 2018 and, at that time, as we reviewed the application – or the previous minister at the time reviewed the application – it was deemed that it didn't need an environmental assessment. There were no triggers there that would have triggered an environmental assessment.

As for the comments regarding the estuary, this area has never been deemed as an estuary, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of permits that have been issued in the past. If, in the event, it was an estuary then all permits would have required an environmental assessment.

We are reviewing some of the correspondence that we have received recently from the concerned citizens and also other residents in the area, but I just want to reiterate that all levels of government have a role to play in this. We did determine, at that time, back in 2018, that an environmental assessment was not necessary. Before the permit was issued, we did go back to the company just to see if there were any changes with regard to their proposed plan. There was a change. They did initially have a plan to utilize or infill 2.5 hectares of land, which they then reduced back to 1.75.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to add that Fisheries and Oceans Canada also has a role to play with regard to reviewing potential effects on the aquatic habitat. Transport Canada, as mentioned, is also involved in this as it relates to commercial and recreational boating. Again, the municipality has an important role to play with

this, as they will ultimately issue the final permit of approval for this project.

I thank the Member opposite. We will reconsider and look at all of the information that has been provided.

Thank you.

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

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, Bonavista as one, are exposed to noise from motorized vehicles that can be harmful to one's hearing or at minimum, uncomfortable. Residents of our province ought not to be exposed to excessive noise. Our government should prohibit the operation of a motor vehicle or motor-assisted bicycle that is not equipped with an operational muffler that is in good working order, which prevents excessive or unusual noise and smoke. The installation and modification of mufflers to increase sound output should also be prohibited, as should the operation of a motor vehicle or a motor-assisted bicycle that produces noise above determined levels.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Highway Traffic Act* so that the use of modified mufflers on motorized vehicles in our province, that exceed a determined noise level, be prohibited.

We've heard lots in the media recently, whether it be in St. John's at the start of the Battery Hill climb or again from many places in rural Newfoundland, where they've been deeply disturbed by the amount of noise that these vehicles give off. Back in 1997, led by then the social services minister or Service NL minister, I'm sorry, at that time, increase the penalties and that was a noble effort, Mr. Speaker, in trying to control this situation, which I think a lot of Newfoundlanders are deeply concerned with.

If we did a jurisdictional scan, we would find that there are some other jurisdictions who state that they are not permitted – it is not permitted,

just plain out. I'm not sure what the legal repercussions or what they do in order to control that, but the only thing I would ask is that for us, in the House of Assembly, to have a look at this legislation just to see as to whether we can go to the point where we can increase what we did in '97 and see if we can curtail and, hopefully, eliminate those vehicles that do provide the discomfort to many people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is an issue, and it doesn't have to be a car or a truck, it's a lot of these other motorized vehicles.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Member for raising this important issue and for the petition.

This is an issue that impacts me. I get woken up every night by loud vehicles in St. John's.

Currently, the police do have the authority to ticket for excessive vehicle noise related to improper or modified aftermarket exhaust systems on vehicles. That is currently in place based on the *Highway Traffic Act*.

One of the things that we've done recently is we've announced new official inspection regulations. If the RNC, for example, stops a motorcycle that they think has been modified, they can order it for an inspection. The motorcycle then has to go to an inspection through a regular garage, and the garage has new regulations. The inspection manuals were sent out, I think, two weeks ago. Then based on that, they have to be found within the regulations, so without modification.

Part of the challenge that I know the RNC have is that they don't necessarily have the expertise to understand the nuances of motorcycle parts. So highway traffic enforcement officers, under Digital Government and Service NL, do blitzes with the RNC and the RCMP, occasionally. Recently, we did a blitz somewhere in St. John's, I think, to capture motorists who had

modified exhausts on their motorcycles and vehicles and we were able to ticket vehicles.

This is something that I feel very passionately about and certainly work towards reducing for the people of the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Orders of the Day

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of Bill 46.

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

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, that Bill 46, An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the bill now be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009." (Bill 46)

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

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased today to speak to the amendments to Bill 46, An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009.

Credit unions have been providing valuable financial services to their members throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for years. They are locally operated; keeping profits in our province and helping our communities grow and thrive. The provincial government collaborates with the

Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, we refer to them as CUDGC – not a very good acronym – to regulate credit unions, ensuring government legislation and sound business practices are followed.

Currently, there are nine credit unions with 36 service locations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. There are over 62,000 full credit union members in Newfoundland and Labrador. Certainly, a huge percentage of residents in our province are credit union members, so this does impact a huge number of residents of the province.

The credit union system employs over 300 people, including nearly 200 living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and provides salaries and benefits of over \$20 million, annually. The *Credit Union Act, 2009*, governs the credit union system in this province, including the incorporation and operation of credit unions and the operation of the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation and authorizes the establishment of a deposit guarantee fund to be funded by the industry to provide protection on insurable deposits up to \$250,000 per type of deposit.

The Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation is a provincial Crown corporation established to ensure deposits of members and associate members in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is responsible for the administration of the *Credit Union Act, 2009*, and the *Credit Union Regulations, 2009*, ensuring compliance with the act and regulations by credit unions, stabilization of the credit union system and administration of the deposit guarantee fund.

In its three-year performance-based Business Plan, from 2017 to 2019, the corporation identified a goal to conduct a comprehensive review of the legislation. The then minister of Service NL's mandate letter also committed to reviewing the recommendations brought forth and making the necessary changes to legislation. Recommendations were provided to the minister in March 2019.

Mr. Speaker, there are a substantial number of amendments introduced today to modernize and update the act to align with industry standards and practice, and reflect the recommendations

brought forward by the Deposit Guarantee Corporation. There are changes related to board governance, record keeping, information disclosure and privacy protection; changes to service to members; changes to the Definitions section; amendments related to authorizing federal continuance and operation of a credit union under federal regulations; changes related to offence provisions and penalties; as well as a number of other individual changes.

While there are numerous amendments to the act, I would now like to highlight some of the most significant changes.

Directors and officers of a credit union and the Deposit Guarantee Corporation must now disclose any potential conflicts of interest. There is now a separation of and updates to the roles of the superintendent of credit unions and CEO of the Deposit Guarantee Corporation. The purpose of the separation is to eliminate any conflict of interest that may arise from the same person holding both positions. Newfoundland and Labrador is currently the only province where the roles are combined.

Mr. Speaker, credit unions often rely on third-party providers and subcontractors to conduct business activities, for example, for information technology services or IT services. However, significant data breaches involving third parties have occurred in the financial service industry in recent years, resulting in losses and, I guess more importantly, loss of trust in certain financial services systems.

A requirement for credit unions to increase oversight of third-party providers may help identify the potential for data breaches. Credit unions would now be required to establish bylaws for selecting third parties, monitoring their performance and establishing reporting requirements for these external entities performing services on behalf of a credit union. Also, the amendments would allow for credit unions to establish bylaws regarding the manner of meetings, including allowing for online meetings, state how voting would be conducted and outline the approval process to issue a dividend or refund.

The Deposit Guarantee Corporation would also be required to notify the superintendent of any

issues of significance that may have potential impacts to credit unions, credit union members or the Guarantee Corporation itself. Furthermore, the superintendent would be responsible for filing corporate documents and would have oversight over the Deposit Guarantee Corporation, including directing them to have an external review completed at least every five years.

Mr. Speaker, the corporation's board is now amended to eight members instead of seven. This is necessary to facilitate the separation of the superintendent and CEO roles. The appointment process would be established in regulations. These regulations are currently under development.

Aside from these substantial changes, there are a number of other amendments that would help modernize the legislation. One such change would allow federal credit unions or *caisse populaire*, their French-language equivalent, to operate in Newfoundland and Labrador. Additionally, provincial credit unions would be able to continue as federal credit unions, meaning they would be able to operate under federal legislation, subject to meeting the appropriate criteria.

In 2012, Mr. Speaker, the federal government put a framework in place that permitted provincial credit unions to continue as federal credit unions under the federal *Bank Act*. British Columbia and New Brunswick are currently the only provinces that have already dealt with a provincial credit union continuing as a federal credit union. As such, the changes we have brought forward today to this province's act are based on their legislation.

The requirements for issuing shares and the approval process for amending bylaws would be moved to the regulations. Given these types of details are operational in nature, they're going to be established in the regulations. We would enhance privacy protection for members and board members by no longer requiring occupations be listed for directors of credit unions. Additionally, we would now require a credit union to obtain explicit consent prior to the release of a member's name and address in the members' register.

We've also made changes to deal with notice periods and timelines more effectively. Mr. Speaker, amendments to offence provisions and penalties have not been made to the act since it was introduced in 2009. As such, they are now expanded to include any information provided or required by the superintendent or the Deposit Guarantee Corporation and the addition of an offence for withholding, destroying, concealing or refusing to provide information. The penalties are increased up to \$25,000 for individuals and from \$10,000 to \$50,000 for corporations.

Mr. Speaker, many times in this House we have heard the importance of ensuring legislation is modern and adequately serves the needs of the people of our province. We note that the financial services industry is continuously changing thereby requiring the act to be updated and streamlined to ensure a competitive arena for credit unions.

Our government has been working co-operatively with the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation to identify changes that best meet the needs of the industry and consumers.

The updated legislation we are introducing today would positively impact consumers and the credit union members with enhancements that reflect today's environment. Amendments to the Credit Union Act and regulations also align the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation structure with similar organizations in other jurisdictions.

I'm happy to bring these amendments to the floor of the House today and I look forward to debating them with my colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, as well.

We look at this, it's a lot of amendments in a short span of time to go through, but a lot of these changes are good. It's good to see the

separations of the roles of the superintendent and the CEO of the deposit authority. Aligning ourselves with our federal counterparts is always a good move, too, especially with the federal banking rules and that. Also, addressing issues when it comes to conflicts of interest.

We're moving and changing some of the legislation to make sure that we eliminate or find ways to keep conflict of interest issues from happening within things, especially this day and age when it comes to banking. Some of the changes, also, when it comes to more IT and stuff coming into the banking industry through a third party.

It's always great to look at ourselves through the lens of what other jurisdictions are doing in the industry. I know that so far through this whole process we have seen that we've been moving more towards being on par with our Canadian counterparts and seeing what they're doing in their jurisdictions so that we align with them. If you receive a service, especially when it comes to banking that you received in one jurisdiction in this country, it's very similar to a service you receive in this jurisdiction. We line up with our counterparts that way and make sure there's no issue when going from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, especially when it comes to banking. As a society as a whole, we've become more mobile and we've become more – travelling a lot more throughout the country. So it's always interesting when it comes to banking.

Just an anecdote with it; I know when my spouse moved to Labrador West they had a credit union in Southern Labrador, but when she came to Labrador West they didn't line up. She actually had to close her accounts and stuff in one credit union to open up in another credit union in our district because at the time when that happened they didn't mesh together in a sense. Even though they were credit unions, they were banking institutions, it just didn't work out.

It seems like at that time in a place – that was 12 years ago, we were in different places. Now it seems we're slowly moving towards trying to keep things as similar as possible for the convenience, safety and security of residents of this province.

This seems like a large quantity of housekeeping and review of what we're doing. This act is 11 years old now and the world has changed significantly in the last 11 years. It just seems the pace of technology; the pace of things that we're reviewing is just speeding up and speeding up. So it's great to stay on top of it and see what our counterparts in other jurisdictions are doing.

We look at, like I said, the separation of the roles for a conflict of interest. When this act was presented and done it was interesting that we decided to go with a model where two roles were one person and separating these roles because of the possibility of a conflict of interest could arise that we now separate these roles. It's a good step in making sure that you avoid any conflict and take the step ahead to make sure we don't go down that road. It's good that we check other jurisdictions to see what they are doing in this setting. So that's a good step. We feel it's good that we are going that way.

Banking is such a complex industry. There are so much ifs, ands or possibility. Like I said, now we're in a world of digital. My bank is on my phone now and there are always worries. There are always things about protecting that thing, especially a lot of those banking apps and a lot of those things are actually run by a third party. So we have to make sure that we protect all – if you're at a national bank, you're at a smaller bank or you're with a nice, friendly community-owned credit union, that there are rules, there are guidelines and there are regulations in place to protect the individual using those systems.

I remember the first time someone told me: Jordan, you can cash a cheque with your phone now, you don't have to go to a bank. I was just like, what's protected? What technology is here to protect me as an individual? What rules are there to protect me as an individual? The industry seems to be moving faster than the pace of government regulation, so we have to make sure that all those things are in place.

If you're a credit union, if you're a bank, you're a federal institution, you're an international institution, we have to make sure the rules and regulations are in place so that no matter what banking is done, your personal information and your information as an individual is protected.

Still, sometimes in this new world that even – I'm only 31 years old, but even now I'm getting like technology is moving way too fast for me. I think the world around us is moving really fast, so we need to keep on top of things that are protecting individuals, users and employees, especially in the world of banking and technology. These are things that we need to make sure that we are, as individuals, protected.

I look forward to when we go to Committee to ask a few questions, so I relinquish my time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It's indeed a pleasure again today to speak to this bill, Bill 46, and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis. Mr. Speaker, this bill is an important bill, as we look at the way things are done today when it comes to banking.

I'm not a member of a credit union, but just looking at some of the notes I have here today, it's pretty interesting that we have 62,000 members here in the province. It's an important piece of legislation for a lot of people. I think the piece of legislation – a lot to do with bringing our legislation in with other jurisdictions and with the times that we live in and what's happening in the world, making sure we have proper protocols in place to protect people and to ensure that we're doing the same as other jurisdictions across the country.

Bill 46 includes 86 proposed amendments to the credit union regarding disclosure of potential conflict of interest by directors and officers, establish bylaws for engaging third parties in credit unions. It also sees the role of the superintendent and the CEO, to separate those duties. It also updates the responsibility of the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation or CUDGC, as the minister referred to. It also

facilitates and establishes with the federal credit union, and I'll have some questions later on that. There are a lot of record keepings that need to be changed, again, with the times. There are some definitions also that are going to be done.

Modernizing language; again, the bill was first established in 2009. I know it's only 11 years but we've changed a lot in 11 years, so there has to be a lot of changes made to make sure we're into the same time. In 2009, I had a flip phone; in 2020, today I got this. I'd rather have the flip phone but that's just me. There's a lot of modernizing and, again, we have to change with the times.

There are also some penalties and offences that have been changed. It has to do with increases. Again, it's 11 years and I guess there are some changes there.

Also in the bill, too, there's some enhancing for membership and change in form of how they can acquire members and how people can sign up for credit unions. Again, it has advanced in the times we live in.

There are also some timelines that have changed, and I'll speak to that a little bit when I get into where the amendment is to. There are also other minor amendments. Like I said, there are 86 amendments. Obviously, not all of them are earth-shattering or anything like that but have to be changed in order to make the bill in with the timelines.

Again, like I said, the act came into effect basically in 2009. There are nine credit unions in the province right now serving 62,000 members. That's a good portion of our province that is involved with credit unions. The minister did make the point that it represents a huge part of rural Newfoundland.

I know over the years we've heard stories and seen news clips where banking services in some parts of Newfoundland have decreased. I'm sure this is great for rural Newfoundland that we do have banking services in those areas to help people be able to do their banking. Like I said, there are 36 locations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The minister mentioned also that there are over 300 people employed in the banking services here in the province. I just look at the banks that I go to lately – and I'm sure most Members would say the same thing, how they've changed. We used to go to tellers and there were so many people behind the counter. I deal with a bank on Elizabeth Avenue. Now you walk in and there are probably only two people there to serve you, because most people are doing things online, most people are going to the instant teller. Also, I haven't done it yet, I haven't cashed a cheque on my phone or anything, but a lot of people are using the digital things that are available to them to do their banking. That's what's happening today.

I would be interested in seeing what the minister has to say about the number of employees because, again, it's important that we maintain our jobs in the credit unions because 317 people are employed. I would like to see that stay like that. The minister also mentioned that it's over about \$20 million in annual salaries that are involved here.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at a credit union, I guess people looked at it for years and just say – I remember there used to be one on Kenmount Road – but they supply services, same thing as a bank. They're there for savings accounts. They're there for loans, mortgages, credit lines and investment services. So it's important. Like I said, there are 36 locations and it gives people in this province an opportunity to make sure that they can do the proper banking because most people could be like me, I like to go to the bank and do my banking. That's the service it provides.

Now, under the new legislation, too, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the legislation is for the protection of people, it's for the protection of privacy. That's the day that we live in when you look at what can happen, like hacking and people online and how they can get in and get personal information. It's a fear of everyone, I'm sure, in the province or anyone that has any banking information or any personal information. It's very important that our privacy be kept.

I know I'm very conscious of giving out any information. I don't want to give it out. I really

don't. I know there are a lot of people in this province today that don't want to give out their information, so it's important that we stay with the times because we're living in a different time.

Back in the earlier days when banks were established, bank robberies were a problem. Today, it's not bank robberies, it's cyber people getting into our accounts, being able to access what we got, and people are very fearful of that. Mr. Speaker, I would say our young people are probably not as fearful as our older people are because they have the technology and they have the know-how to do things.

I know myself, when I go and do anything online or give a credit card number or anything at all, I'm very conscious of making sure that I really have to do it well because I don't want anybody to get my credit card number; I don't want anybody to know my personal information; I don't want anybody to be able to get into my system to see what it is.

When we're talking banking, we're talking about a lot of personal information that people do not want to share and don't want anybody going in to see what they have or whatever. Privacy is very important. This legislation today takes care of some of it, but it's just a part of it.

Credit unions are independently owned and they're owned by their own members. They own the credit union. Each board has directors, which are elected by the members. Credit unions are all governed by a Crown corporation, and the Crown corporation is called the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation. Their job, basically, is to ensure that the administration and ensuring the compliance of credit unions and the Credit Union Act and the regulations of the Credit Union Act are all followed. That's very important.

The board of directors are nominated by industry and appointed by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL. There are two government officials on the board and that's specified in the act. The current act has it so that the superintendent and CEO are the one individual. The new act will separate the roles of those two people and have two different people. Also, I think – and I could be corrected, Minister

– that they are not a government official. They're outside government that can be the CEO of the union. Before, it could be the deputy minister or it could be somebody in the department that could hold one of those positions.

Between 2017 and 2019, it was CUDGC who completed a review of the legislation. They made the recommendations to the minister. I'll have some questions later to the minister about those recommendations. The amendments that followed were through public commitment by government to ensure that these changes would be made to make sure that we brought credit unions into what's happening in the rest of the country. I believe the Credit Union Managers Association played a role; credit unions themselves played a role. Plus, there were some jurisdictional scans to ensure that we're on the same page as other areas of the province.

There are 198 sections in the current act and Bill 46 deals with, like I said, 86 of them. The minister did mention some of the major ones that were spoken about, so I'm just going to mention a couple here now and just go through them a little bit for my understanding and our party's understanding of some of them.

Requiring directors and officers of credit unions and CUDGC to disclose personal conflicts of interest. I've been around a little bit and if you look at most of the legislation that's done today, that's an important part. We do it here as Members of the House of Assembly. We make sure that if a person is in a position they shouldn't have any conflict to deal with that benefits them in any way at all. It's just a sign of the times. I think all legislation, basically, that's coming in, basically, does that, to protect people so they're not in a conflict. That's just for the officers and the directors to make sure that everything is in line.

Requiring credit unions to establish bylaws to engaging third parties to form services on behalf of the credit union. Again, this is the part that I spoke about a little bit earlier, about privacy and the importance that we give minimum risk that any of the important stuff to people, that it's not put out there to the public; it's your private individual stuff.

When you talk about IT services, in most cases now any organization – or most organizations I would say – have IT service providers that are probably outside your organization. It's important that this act requires the union to establish some bylaws to ensure the privacy that people have is there and make sure that these, whatever it is – and officials noted that it really does help (inaudible) the members so that there can be third-party arrangements.

Like I mentioned earlier, another part is separating the roles and duties of the superintendent and the CEO. The CEO will now be hired by and report to CUDGC. It will not be a government employee. That's the part I just mentioned to the minister. Also, an interesting thing here is that sometimes I know that when they did – I'm not sure how they did their annual meetings or whatever, but they had an issue come up from CUDGC, they did not have to report that to the CEO. That will change now because that member will be part of that group. That's an important part of the structure of the board.

Mr. Speaker, updating the duties, the powers and the responsibilities of CUDGC and the superintendent. They looked at what happened in this bill – I guess the people in the department looked at other jurisdictions across the country and looked at the best practice and aligned them with what we should be doing here in the province to make sure our legislation is up to date with everybody else's.

Other things we should note: 13 of the 18 amendments are related to record keeping. A lot of that has to do with the protection of privacy.

Ten of the amendments are related to new and revised definitions. Again, there are several definitions related to federal continuance and material contracts. These are examples of definitions that have been added, and some have been changed. There are nine amendments related to modernizing and updating language.

Section 36 on trust funds is updated.

Electronic transactions; again, I'll go back to the previous Member who spoke. He said transactions are done so differently today. I mean, someone can send you \$20 on your phone

rather than hand it to you in your hand. Those things have to be modernized and those are things that need to be done. In section 180, that clarifies a lot of stuff when it comes to mail and electronic means to be considered, to be received by a credit union.

Seven amendments are related to facilitating and establishing a federal credit union. This is a new section in the act and it's interesting, because officials explained that this is a long ways away but it would be good for our province to have this in our act. They can't see anything in the future where the federal credit union will need approval from our province, but they want to put it in the act now so that when it comes down the road, and no one knows when down the road, that this will be part of the act.

There are also five amendments there to replace all references relating to 19 years older, with the age of majority changed. I guess, if you look at that, it could be related to – probably there could be a change in age. It could be reduced to 18, from 19 to 18. This is something so that if that does happen you won't have to go back and change the amendments. Because in other jurisdictions there is a change, there is a different age for what is required to be a member.

An interesting one, there are five amendments that talk about the increases for offences and penalties. This is under sections 169 and 170. There's an upper limit, amounts to individuals are increased to \$25,000 for fines, and corporations are between \$10,000 and \$50,000.

There are also five amendments aimed at enhancing the membership of credit unions, allowing members to be more involved in decision-making, more involved in attracting members, I suppose. I think that's the way it is.

There are also four amendments dealing with timelines. Again, as we know, as we live in this pandemic things have gone a little differently when it comes to meetings. This is to change the timelines that meetings can occur. Also, for electronic meetings, officials can do different ways to run the business to make sure that meetings occur at a separate time now.

I would assume it will be a lot easier when you look at 36 branches out over the province for them to get together now rather than having to come and do the one meeting. Because we're all getting used to Zoom and different ways of doing meetings. So this will be important amendments to the legislation. This will deal with different timelines and how people can do meetings.

There are several other regulations and amendments that are changing – anything to do with regulations. Mr. Speaker, any time we do a bill here in the House of Assembly – I know it's one thing with me, and I know it's been with a lot of Members over the years, we don't see the regulations. We never see the regulations. We pass the bills and the regulations are: Oh, we'll get them down the road or whatever.

In this case, there will be a lot of regulations that the authority that CUDGC will have, they'll put into this act afterwards. I guess that's part of what it is. I know myself, I always like to see the regulations before we pass anything, but that's just the way the bill is.

Mr. Speaker, again, I go back to the act itself. It's important that we do things right. I think it's important that the group took the time to do what they had to do. It took over two years for them to make recommendations. I'm not sure if there were other recommendations or were there other groups involved in this legislation.

I'm sure there are banking associations and the Commerce, Bank of Canada or whatever, we could have gone to make sure that we're doing the proper things when it comes to that. Because if you look at a credit union, a credit union to me is no different than a Royal Bank or a Scotiabank or whatever bank (inaudible). If you look at what people in this province depend on credit unions, it's important that we get this legislation right and it's important that we make sure that people's – the biggest thing I can understand from this whole thing is the privacy of individuals. I'll just go back to that for a minute.

It's so important; because today we live in times that I'm sure a lot of us never ever thought we would live in, where your privacy and breach of your privacy could cause such an effect. We

look at different times that people, especially our seniors, are so worried about scamming. People scamming them and getting their private or anyone's private information, whether it's a credit card number or social security number or anything. It's a worrisome effect on a lot of people in this province; it's a worrisome effect on me.

I think the proper legislation has to be put in place to ensure that people have the protection of their privacy and ensure that they can do their banking and to do it in a modernized way that we're doing things today with the protection that it needs. I'm hoping that everything in this act will protect individuals and ensure that their banking future will remain – privacy will remain.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the budget debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion 1.

It is moved and seconded that we move to the budget debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on the budget on behalf of the constituents of Placentia West - Bellevue that have given me the opportunity to represent them in this hon. House.

When it comes to the budget, Mr. Speaker, I have a very robust, industrial, large district. It goes 5,503 square kilometres from Long Harbour to Marystown. Within that, we have Vale in Long Harbour. We have Bull Arm, which has DF Barnes working with Equinor and Suncor out there and we hope that the refit can get done at the FPSO in Bull Arm.

I also have the North Atlantic refinery in my district, and up until a couple of weeks ago there was a promise that it was being sold. People held out hope that, I guess, the Irvings were going to do the right thing and, unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

We work hard now to make sure that we can ensure employment in this region. Just last week, I spoke on the national morning show to talk about the impact that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. DWYER: Mr. Speaker, it's hard to hear myself speak.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. DWYER: Sorry, I don't think I was speaking when everybody else was presenting today. I find it rather rude because we talked about a respectful workplace and it continuously happens. It's on both sides, I agree, but we have to have some decorum and respect. If you're going to sit in the House, then sit in the House and listen to the person who's talking. We're all in this together and if we want to have to respect for each other, then show some integrity.

Thank you for letting me go there, Mr. Speaker.

Like I said, when it comes to the refinery, we obviously have our hands full in making sure that we can get a sale done here. From the people that I've talked with, I don't come off as an engineer; I have a business degree. That's how I bring things forward, is from that perspective. If I need to know about the engineering of it, I will certainly reach out to people and colleagues of mine that I know will give me trusted information. The trusted information I have right now is that we have to do better and we can do better.

This budget is pretty much for the status quo, which is acceptable, I guess, in these unprecedented times, but we can't keep blaming everything on COVID.

I also have a facility down in the Marystown area in Spanish Room. It's called Cow Head, which is currently employing 110 workers with Kiewit offshore initiatives. Again, we can do more. This is 110 workers, but down in Corpus Christi, Texas, there are 750 workers working on the same project, spending our money for us. We all know that if we employ our own people, every dollar that's made in this province is spent four times. This is not acceptable, to be having contracts outside this province. I think we need to get our own people to work; we need to utilize our own facilities. If that costs us a little bit more money, the payoff in the long run is a much better, bigger reward.

We also have Whiffen Head, the on-loading and off-loading facility just off Arnold's Cove – state of the art. People that come and dock at the facility talk about how easy it is, in and out and all this kind of stuff. I also have a fish plant in Southern Harbour, which processes many species. We also have a state-of-the-art fish plant in Icwater Seafoods in Arnold's Cove. They utilize 99.8 per cent usage of every cod that comes through those doors and that's quite impressive. They sell the skins to leather companies for binding the seams. They make pet food. There's so much and they portion it out. They're doing it in different blocks now as opposed to being all 100 pound boxes; they cut it down to personal-size boxes with 10, 20 and 30 pounds.

They're just unbelievable, and the owner Alberto Wareham, I'd really like to give him a shout out because, in my opinion, he's a benchmark for businessmen in the whole province. He cares about his staff, he cares about his employees and he cares about the product that's coming through his door. Pretty much with the way that they do operations in Arnold's Cove, Icwater Seafoods, Mr. Speaker, they've been such a benchmark that they've made other graders of fish increase because they know that bringing it up to a grade A product is what's needed to get the best price.

Like I said, I would really give a big shout out to Alberto's family. It was his dad and them that carried it on from other generations and Alberto's son Ryan is going to carry on with Icwater Seafoods. They just invested \$10 million into a fish plant in a town of 985 people. That's a pretty significant investment around the bay. We have to invest in stuff in here like marijuana and stuff and we can't even get a bit of secondary processing. Maybe they should go out and talk to Alberto Wareham and figure out how to do some secondary processing so that we can get our cannabis plants up to 99.8 per cent efficiency.

We can't be wasting money. We have to put money into ourselves; we have to put money into our people. It's not about the 40 people in here. It's about the 522,000 that we represent. I don't put on no blue shirt every day, but I think the reason why I align more with the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador is because they have the same colour as my collar. I'm one of these people outside these walls. I struggled, I don't have it all, but I guarantee you one thing, we can be better. We don't have to get on about the giveaways and about spending \$5 to save \$1. It's enough of it. We can be better.

Like I said, Alberto Wareham in Arnold's Cove, he's probably the benchmark to the province of how things can be done and why they should be done.

I also support the unions, as do the owner of the fish plant. I've gone out to all the unions and they know that they have access to me. If they want to talk to me, I have their back as well. It's my constituents that I'm here for.

We have many fishing enterprises in my district as well, Your Honour. All these fishermen and people that they employ know that I'm here to fight for them as well. It doesn't matter if it's about the price, if it's about the quotas, whatever it is. I go and I talk to my colleague, the critic for Fisheries, but that's how I educate myself, because I know that man is going to give me trusted information that I can bring back to those enterprises and those fisher people, and make sure that they're confident in the information that I give them.

Moving on to outside of the industry of my district. In the last 16 months that I've been in office here as the MHA for the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue, we have gotten some significant work, but it's not because it was by anything that was already on the books. It might have been already discussed but it certainly was being prepared to be taken off the books, until I got involved and made sure that we could probably work out a more equitable solution and make sure that roadwork was getting done.

Swift Current, for example, seemed to be more of a Route 210 job as opposed to being a Seaview Drive in Swift Current job. So we fought and we got the side roads completed and made them passable. These were the detours for when they were putting in the culverts and stuff like that. We made sure that the company went back and fixed it up to where it should be.

Chapel Arm was a big job but they forgot to do the – well, it wasn't included, I guess. It's not that they forgot because it was an excellent job done by municipal, but the off-ramp and a couple of other things that needed to be done weren't done. Consequently, we went back and got the off-ramp done this year and we got some more pavement in through a very deteriorated road due to all the traffic in that area. As we know, it's just across the highway from the Long Harbour entrance as well.

Norman's Cove-Long Cove is another one that was looking to be deferred. I fought hard to get that back on because what comes with doing a full new lay down is brush cutting and ditching. That was probably needed more in our district than anything. Right now, we're doing a job for 18 kilometres from Red Harbour to Marystown. It's a very significant job but it needed to be done.

I consequently have gone to the department and had some patching done. Morning Hill Cove was atrocious. I went with a solution and an ask and it was pretty expeditiously done. Then, Drakes hill to Marystown was pretty much tore apart. They just had done a great big project from the bottom of Drakes Cove right up through Creston North, and failed to do the most serious area of the whole thing. Again, that's what I fought for on behalf of my constituents.

The biggest issue, I think, really with the department more than anything – and it's an important department because, like you said, nobody wants to go back to cow paths, as my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port had said and my colleague from Terra Nova. Let's tear it up and maintain it as a gravel road. Really? That's where we're going? We can do better, and we must do better.

The biggest thing right now in the whole province really is brush cutting and ditching. I think that is just because it was not even thought about in the last four or five years. I had to pick up a lot of pieces from the former Member that sat in this seat on behalf of Placentia West – Bellevue, because it seemed to be more important to get things done in the Burin - Grand Bank District, Madam Speaker, than it was to take care of his own district. For that, I got grandfathered into something that was probably unnecessary.

Saying that it's a beautiful district, and I am very honest in saying that. I don't take that lightly because I very much support the promotion of healthy living in the communities. I've helped with getting some allocation for some trail work. I'm sure there are lots of people on both sides who have gone out and walked the trail in Chance Cove, for instance. A beautiful trail, and it's probably second to none. It was a little bit of funding that helped them get over the hump to make it something that can attract people to their area.

The whole summer I saw people making posts the whole time, especially on the Newfoundland hiking Facebook page, of how often and how many people went to the trails in my district, and Chance Cove being one of them. The Bordeaux Trail – we all call it in here, but if you're in Arnold's Cove it's the birdie trail – we had some maintenance done on that and it's a beautiful trail as well, world-class.

Right now, we have a new Trail Association formed in Red Harbour. They're taking care of their trail. They're getting lots of work done on it, and it's nice to be able to support them as well.

Marystown is just getting a bunch of work done on some trails there. Promoting healthy living is

not just for the like-minded any more. If the facilities are there, it's like the old saying goes: Build it, they will come.

I guess the thing is, we can no longer hide behind COVID and be a reactive government. It's not good enough to just keep the lights on anymore; we need to be proactive. We have all these natural resources. We have the best workforce in the country; we're second to none. Anywhere we go we get a good name of what we do.

There's a big difference between rotational workers that are coming here and rotational workers that are going out of the province. Rotational workers that go out of our province are needed because they're filling jobs that can't be filled by people in the other provinces, but when we fill jobs here with people that can fulfill the jobs and that are looking for jobs and want jobs, then we are doing a total disservice as Members of this hon. House in not protecting them and making them first. It's their money that we're spending. Why would we give it to a company in Quebec? Or why would we give it to a company in Ontario?

If we can't get it done here by somebody, I understand it getting contracted out but I do not understand it being the first and foremost option. We need to be more proactive, and that comes down to planning. Have a plan, stick to it and give people an idea of where we're headed, what the direction is and why we're going there.

Again, in this economy, we had many people with Crown lands applications that were held up. I don't want to say anything about the current minister because I really do think he's trying to clear up a big backlog too, but I really hope that the backlog is not only in PC districts. I hope it's all over the province, the reason why this backlog has occurred. I think we all know why the backlog occurred.

Another big thing for me in my district and where I hold a lot of respect is for my volunteers. I volunteered all my life, but I don't talk about volunteering very much anymore because I've been in the presence of some truly remarkable people that actually put their life of the line when they volunteer, and that's our firefighters and having the support groups. In

Marystown it's the Fire Wrens and the Sparks and stuff like this. So for me, they approach it like a family. They rely on each other, and I'm very proud to be part of that family in many parts of our district.

We've regionalized most of our fire departments so that they depend on each other. I promote the fact that communication is paramount. These people are second to none and really do give us some selfless protection. For that, I'm really, really grateful.

The biggest strategy, and I've said this from day one since I came in here and it's something I'll never stop talking about, but maybe it's time to sit down and have a Wi-Fi and cellphone strategy. We need to look at this from many different angles. We need to look at it from business. We don't need to be so archaic that we can only get email sent or phone calls made in certain areas. That's just ludicrous. If it's good inside the overpass, it's good outside the overpass.

Safety is a big concern. I have a lot of kilometres on that Burin Peninsula Highway where you don't have any coverage. If you go off the road, yeah, you're there until you see the kindness of somebody else, and that's if they stop. In these times, how do you know if somebody will stop?

It's for personal use as well. Again, if we're going to invest in infrastructure for inside the overpass, then let's make sure that outside the overpass is getting the same advantage. We're too far behind the times not to have cellphone coverage and Wi-Fi for personal use.

We also have students that are in some of the most remote areas of the province. They can't do online courses, just for the simple fact that they don't have Wi-Fi or cell service. That's just not acceptable. We need to get it everywhere.

As we heard from MNL, they want to do online care. Not everybody has access, so therefore we need to get that infrastructure in, up and running because it's not acceptable anymore.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would really like to say thank you to my constituents for giving me the opportunity to represent them with integrity and respect. Anybody that calls me, I

call them back. I'll be straight with people. They may not hear exactly what they called to hear, but I'm going to be straight with them. I'm going to give them the straight goods. If I don't have the answer, I'm going to get it, and I'll find it too. I'll still be honest with them and straightforward.

I bring all concerns forward, I don't let it sit – nothing rests on deaf ears. I keep confidentiality paramount and everybody knows that anybody that calls me they know that their story is only between us.

Once the votes were all counted and the residents living in my beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue, they were all my constituents. I don't play favourites with nobody and I don't want favourites played with me. I don't ask for favours and I'm not going to repay any favours because I don't ask for them. I want to be treated fairly, equitably and I want to represent the 520,000 people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Baie Verte - Springdale, right?

MR. WARR: Baie Verte - Green Bay.

MADAM SPEAKER: Baie Verte - Green Bay.

MR. WARR: Green Bay, Madam Speaker, like the Green Bay Packers.

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

MR. WARR: My favourite football team.

Anyway, thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon to speak to the triple-T budget of 2020: Today. Tomorrow. Together.

I look across at the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis and I think when he's done with his

position here, he's going to be remembered for the adjective of beautiful. I'll say as well that I'm privileged to represent the beautiful District of Baie Verte - Green Bay, a district that I spent most of my lifetime in, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the support and the ongoing efforts of the people within my community to make us strong and vibrant.

Before I get involved in my notes today, Madam Speaker, I certainly wanted to take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Finance – and not President of Treasury Board anymore, but the Minister of Finance – and certainly the former minister of Finance, who is presently today the Minister of Education, for the great work that they did in preparing our government to present the 2020 budget. In particular, I want to acknowledge as well her support staff within the Department of Finance, again, for the great work that they've done.

I also want to thank the Premier, the Premier of the province, for giving me the opportunity to pick up on where my colleague, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair left the Department of CSSD in absolutely fabulous shape. I, too, Madam Speaker, want to extend my thanks to that department for the welcome that they've offered me when I took over the role. A great bunch of people to work with and work for, and I'm looking forward to continuing the good work as we move forward.

One more vote of thanks and that's to the Department of Education and early childhood development, Madam Speaker. I had the opportunity to spend 15, 16 months with the Department of Education and early childhood development. It goes without saying that they put in a lot of hard work, especially with the pressures that department was under during the late winter, early spring and into the summer, making the important decisions that they had to do to get our children back in class.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll move to my role as Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities and, certainly, Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. Today, given the time, I'd like to speak about the Department of Children, Seniors

and Social Development. I'm pleased today to highlight some of the department's programs and services that support individuals, children, youth, families, seniors and persons with disabilities.

There's certainly a lot of great work happening here in my new portfolio. It's been wonderful meeting many of the department staff at provincial offices and starting to meet regional staff, as well as community partners. Just last week, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to travel to Labrador for the first time in my role. I had the opportunity to visit both Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Sheshatshiu and on to Nain. To say that it was a wonderful experience is an understatement when you see the rugged beauty of Labrador.

The Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development has eight lines of business: child protection, in care, adoptions, youth services, youth corrections, adult protection, persons with disabilities and seniors and aging. While I may not have time to speak to all of these areas today, I'll do my best to cover as many as I can with a focus on the positive things my department is doing every day and also highlighting some of the efforts during the height of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The protection and advancement of the interests and the well-being of our province's children and youth is a tremendous responsibility. Through the *Children, Youth and Families Act*, which came into effect in June of 2019, the department has strengthened our commitment to being child and youth centred, family focused and culturally responsive. It is truly a progressive piece of legislation, which is having positive impacts and benefits for children, youth and their families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

This act has an enhanced focus on supporting families in an effort to maintain children and youth safely in their family homes and supporting kinship and significant others to provide assistance when children must be outside their families for a period of time.

Earlier on, during COVID-19 public health emergency, the Department of Children, Seniors

and Social Development had to pivot to ensure that our essential services continued to be accessible and available. This included such things as child protection, adult protection and supports to seniors and persons with disabilities on a variety of matters. As well, in an effort to ensure individuals and community groups could best connect with the department, as needed, the department implemented a new toll-free telephone number. This central line had options for the department's essential services and most importantly to report both child and adult abuse and neglect.

Furthermore, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the department temporarily modified the delivery of its essential services and made the difficult decision to temporarily replace in-person visits between children and youth in care and their parents with virtual contact where in-person contact could not be safely maintained.

While not a substitute, Madam Speaker, for the importance of in-person physical contact, this approach enabled some forms of contact to continue. Where necessary, the department provided families with the technology to ensure video-based visits, phone calls, text messages and emails could continue.

As we began to move through the living with COVID-19 plan and in consultation with the province's chief medical officer of health, the department began reinstating in-person family visitation. I am pleased to report that in-person family visits have fully resumed.

It's important to note that over 200 children and youth continue to have visits with family during the temporary suspension, where it was safe to do so.

The health and safety of children, youth and their families as well as the health and safety of our foster parents, adoptive applicants, residential care providers and department staff are, and continue to be, paramount, especially during these unprecedented times. The working relationship of myself and my department with our Indigenous partners is of the utmost importance.

We are committed, Madam Speaker, to reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in

care and strengthen collaboration in the best interests of the families we support.

The *Children, Youth and Families Act*, as well as the new federal legislation, An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit And Métis children, youth and families, have a number of provisions that ensure Indigenous children and youth in care remain connected with their culture, including the requirement for cultural connection plans and providing notification on significant measures to Indigenous representatives.

As part of the improved service delivery, our department maintains a positive working relationship with the Indigenous governments and organizations, such as the Nunatsiavut Government, Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation and Mushuau Innu First Nation so we can collectively ensure the overall safety and protection of Indigenous children and youth. I look forward, Madam Speaker, to continuing this collaboration with the Indigenous leadership.

The department's legislation has also enhanced the department's Youth Services program so that all youth under a Youth Services Agreement can receive services until their 21st birthday. I am pleased to advise that early on in the COVID-19 pandemic the department temporarily amended its Kinship Services and Youth Services programs. This was to ensure that youth whose age would have seen them no longer qualify for services from the department were offered the opportunity to voluntarily receive support from the department during the COVID-19 public health state of emergency. We felt it important to ensure our commitment to these youth until proper transition planning could occur.

This decision was aligned with the Child Welfare League of Canada's call to action, consistent with the majority of provinces and territories, as well as received by the province's Child and Youth Advocate. As we move through the Living with COVID-19 plan, the department's social workers have begun working with these youth on transition planning.

I'm going to use the remainder of my time to discuss some of the specific program areas of my department. Something dear to my own family, Madam Speaker, is adoptions. In the last

two budgets, we had the additional resources allocated to expand permanency options for children and youth in foster care through developing adoption profiles for children and youth and approval process.

There are loving families, Madam Speaker, just waiting to be grown, and children and youth needing the love and care of a permanent home. The goal of these additional resources has been to help match children to their families move more quickly.

I mentioned earlier, Madam Speaker, that that was near and dear to my heart. The only two grandchildren that I have, have been adopted into my daughter's family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. WARR: It goes without saying, Madam Speaker, they're the love of my life.

Anyway, I'm pleased to advise that with these extra resources, the department advanced the adoption plans for over 60 children and youth in care.

During 2018, our government marked the fulfillment of the inclusion framework and action plan: *Access. Inclusion. Equality*. During the beginning months of this year, we wrapped up a successful and very extensive series of engagement sessions regarding accessibility legislation. I am proud to report that the engagement on accessibility legislation to date has been identified as the most inclusive engagement process ever held by government and is a model for future community engagement. Engaging persons with disabilities and those who speak on their behalf in government initiatives is vital.

At the end of February, we concluded the engagement process with a very successful and informative symposium and workshop to help set the foundation for what the legislation will look like. Throughout the engagement process we heard repeatedly and consistently from the community of persons with disabilities and stakeholders that we need a made in Newfoundland and Labrador approach to accessibility legislation.

This enabling legislation will allow us to develop and enforce standards that will prevent, reduce and remove barriers for peoples with disabilities. We are committed, Madam Speaker, to safe and sustainable communities, and a key component is ensuring inclusion and accessibility for all people. To this end, we are committed to having accessibility legislation in our province. We are continuing to work with the members of the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and key community partners to advance this important disability rights legislation.

We certainly value the role of the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities to advise our department on disability related issues. In fact, just a few weeks ago I met with the chair of the Provincial Advisory Council for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Fraser Piccott, to discuss this important legislation and the roles of the council.

Further, the Disability Policy Office works closely with all government departments and agencies, as well as persons with disabilities and advocacy groups, to ensure government policies and programs include the views of persons with disabilities to identify, reduce and prevent barriers. This will continue to play a very important role in advancing the work on the accessibility legislation.

During COVID-19, the Disability Policy Office continued to work with partnered departments and agencies to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to essential services. This has included home care, ASL and text-based supports being available to deaf and hard of hearing persons and persons with communication disabilities, and the network of disability organizations and the Disability Policy Office participating in the vulnerable population task force. I am pleased that we have partnered with 811 HealthLine, Food First NL, Jimmy Pratt Foundation, SeniorsNL and NL Association for the Deaf to make the Community Food Helpline available and accessible during COVID-19.

As well, my department has a number of grants to support accessibility and encourage inclusion, including the Accessible Vehicle program and

the Accessible Taxi Program, capacity-building grants, Inclusion Grants, as well as supports for paratransit. We have been taking a holistic, government-wide approach to improve accessibility and inclusion through our Interdepartmental Working Group for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, which works to ensure programs and policies are inclusive.

Poverty, Madam Speaker, is complex and there's no one-fits-all solution. Through our programs and services and providing supports and funding to community organizations, we are helping to address poverty-related issues in the province. Our focus is to empower people across their lifespan to prevent, reduce and alleviate poverty to increase overall well-being through initiatives such as the adult literacy plan, funding to Family Resource Centres and Supporting Youth with Transitions and the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit.

One of the keys to reducing poverty is addressing the complex needs that contribute to the challenges faced by some of the most vulnerable members of our society. We are also focusing on assisting residents with low and moderate incomes to access programs and services available through the provincial and federal governments.

Every couple of years we release an updated plain-language guide to provincial government programs and services. The updating process is anticipated to begin in the coming months for the release of the next guide. We also have been working with Canada Revenue Agency to promote tax filing for low-income individuals and families so that they can access federal programs and services.

The COVID-19 pandemic, Madam Speaker, certainly shone a spotlight on poverty and raised awareness in the larger community of issues relating to poverty and the need for a holistic response from our community partners. We are truly seeing the power of collaboration. Government and community led a vulnerable population task force in response to the pandemic which continues today. The task force focuses on the needs of people who are the most vulnerable during these unprecedented times such as seniors who experience isolation, people

who are homeless or precariously housed and families who experience food insecurity and solutions in real time.

We are continuing to work with the federal government in case there's a second wave of COVID-19 and to continue potential impacts once federal benefits end and/or transition to other benefits.

As well, Madam Speaker, our province has agreed to enter a Safe Restart Agreement with the federal government along with other provinces and territories to help advance initiatives impacted by the pandemic such as health care, early learning, child care and municipalities as well as to help make the country more resilient to the possible future waves of COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, we are committed to protecting the health and well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and most importantly ensuring the safety of those in neglectful and abusive situations. The *Adult Protection Act* is a strong and progressive piece of legislation and is successfully being implemented throughout the province. The five-year statutory review included an engagement process, which allowed our department to connect with a diverse range of stakeholders throughout the province, including police, RHA staff, Indigenous governments, community groups and the public.

I am pleased to report that the review of the *Adult Protection Act* is being finalized and will enable us to further support and protect vulnerable adults in the province through policy and legislative amendments.

I know we all want to age at home or in our communities and we all need to have a voice in that conversation. That is why we are creating age-friendly communities, which is where the physical and social environment of a community enable people to live in a secure setting, enjoy health and continue to participate in society regardless of age. That's so important, Madam Speaker.

The department has an Age-Friendly Newfoundland and Labrador Community Program. This grant program provides

incorporated municipalities and Indigenous governments and communities throughout our province with the opportunity to obtain support and plan for population aging. We also have a grant program for community transportation initiatives. When we evaluated the Age-Friendly Transportation Pilot, it confirmed that in addition to age, other barriers such as mobility, income and geography also impact people's ability to be active and involved in their community, or to access the programs and services they need.

I see, Madam Speaker, that my time is running down. I appreciate the opportunity to just update you on some of the aspects of my Department of CSSD. I will be supporting this budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Madam Speaker, it's an honour to sit here and talk today on the budget.

I listened to the Member across talk about the budget. He referred to it as *Today. Tomorrow. Together*. I'd like to say that the budget is pretty reflective of the money that's been spent so far this year. More appropriately, it should be titled where we are as a province and where we are as a people; still keeping in tune with the three Ts: troublesome, turbulent and treacherous. It's a sign of the times that we're in.

While I will say I support this budget, it's reflective of where we are. As I said, the last 12 months, most of this money has been spent already and it's a path to get us to the next budget, which is needed.

The last 12 months have been very troublesome on many people for many different reasons: COVID, Snowmageddon. Many of us have suffered losses of friends and family and many, many, many unemployed Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Most of us are very concerned as to how these people get back to work and where we go. What I will say is I do feel this budget lacks a plan to get us to that point.

When I was 17 or 18 and graduated high school, I joined the military. Back then, as a kid, I was a Newfoundlander and I loved Newfoundland perhaps more than anything. My next-door neighbour, a gentleman from Harbour Main, Pat Joy his name was, asked me what I was most afraid of. I said to him: Patty, I'm afraid of not coming home. He said: That's part of joining the military. I said: I'm not talking about dying, Pat; I'm talking about not moving home. The day after I left Newfoundland was the day I started trying to find a way to get back here.

I say that because I think it's very relevant with regard to the conversations that have been going on around rotational workers and people that are going to have to now make decisions to go away and work. Rotational workers don't leave Newfoundland and come back every two, three weeks or four weeks because they have to work; they do it because they love Newfoundland and Labrador. They do it because it's a choice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARROTT: People don't leave for a couple of weeks and leave their children, their wives and go away and work on oil rigs – or work anywhere, even offshore, join the military, any of this stuff – because of any negative affliction for their province, they do it because they love their province. They choose to live here – they choose to live here. They don't choose to go away and work and set up roots, which is the easiest option for them, make no mistake about it. The love that people feel for this province is known all around the world. I can remember being a young soldier and sitting down and somebody would say: Where are you from? Every Newfoundlander would say Newfoundland.

Now, if you were Kingston or Montreal or Charlottetown or Halifax, that was the answer, nobody said they were from PEI or Saskatchewan or Ontario, they named the town they were in. But if you were a Newfoundlander, you said: I'm from Newfoundland. I tell you what, I'm pretty proud to be a Newfoundlander. I was pretty proud to tell people I was a Newfoundlander.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARROTT: I look at what's happening, and, listen, I've sworn allegiance to the Queen as a soldier and I've done it here as an MHA, and there's nobody more loyal in this room than I am to anything; to my party, to my family to my friends, to my province, to my country, but there comes a point in life when we have to look at where we stand and understand how we address our issues. I can tell you right now, we don't have a plan for this province going forward.

Listen, make no mistake about it, the federal government has forgotten about us. I know people will argue that they haven't, and in tune with that, as a result, the provincial government has partially forgot about us because they have to line up with the federal government.

By saying no to oil and gas, they are saying to no to Newfoundland, and in the very next breath they accept Saudi oil and that's okay. But it's not okay – it's not okay. While oil and gas represents 30 per cent of our GDP, and it only represents 10 per cent of the GDP of Canada and 30 per cent for Newfoundland and Labrador, you have to think, we have 521,000 people and 30 per cent of our GDP comes from oil and gas.

There's nobody, nobody on that side yelling and screaming to our federal counterparts saying: We got to get this fixed. What are you going to do for us? There's nobody getting on a plane and going up there. I tell you what, friendship, relationships, telephone calls is not going to fix it. It is not going to fix it. We are in a hole and we have no way out.

We can be as optimistic as we want and we can hope that people are going to fix it but hope isn't going to get us anywhere. The Minister of Health coined a phrase: Hope is best for a girl's name. I tend to agree with him. Hope is not a good thing. Turning over stones is not a good thing. Planting trees is a good thing but it's not a good thing when industries are dying, natural resource industries are dying and what's most important to our federal counterparts is tree planting programs.

Our federal counterparts have let us down and in turn, like I said, so have our provincial counterparts. We have an oil refinery out there that's shut and shuttered, depending – not

wanting, depending – on a way to go into a hot idle so it can be sold. I can tell you right now from experience, if it doesn't happen, that refinery will be very hard to sell. It rusts immediately. You're not talking about general composites or anything; you're talking about heater tubes that are stainless steel. The minute moisture gets in there, things go south very quickly.

There are two things. First off, if you don't keep steam and moisture out of there, you don't keep rust out of there. If rust does get in there, when you go to start it up, guess what else? You just created a bomb; a very unsafe work environment for Newfoundland men and women to go to work when it does reopen. It's imperative on us, as a group of people that come to this House, to find a way, to find solutions for things such as the oil refinery.

The Terra Nova FPSO, it's not an anchor. It's not an anchor, and at the rate it's going, it will be. The Barents, set to leave today, and not a word – not a word.

I hear people over there all the time saying give us some ideas. Well, you know what, the conversations don't happen. I can tell you right now – and I won't name names, but I have sent emails to ministers over there and they don't have the courtesy to reply. Not the courtesy to reply. So it's not me they're not replying to, it is men and women of this province who expect representation regardless of where you're from. Where does that go? It makes no sense. Just because they're not in their district, they're not going to reply. As a minister, I would think your role is to reply.

I remain optimistic about our oil and gas industry. Right now, the reality of it is oil and gas is a silver bullet for us to get out of this hole, regardless of the price. I've heard Members over there talking about the 2015 budget and say we had no idea the effect of jobs in Alberta would have on our ability to budget and pay bills. Well, guess what? What happened in Alberta in 2015 and '16 ought to have alarmed them to what's happening right now. So six years, no plan.

Advance 2030, the best plan ever. Now listen, I've been here 15 months, but I've heard it for longer than that. *Advance 2030* is the saviour of

this province – the saviour. *Advance 2030* wasn't something that was going to come along and help us or anything, it was the saviour. Six hundred and fifty sites offshore, for offshore oil and gas exploration. That would be all equivalent to Hebron. These are words that were said from the previous minister – 650. You know what? There are three operating now.

We were going to double our oil and gas production by 2030. I can tell you, I'm not very good at math, but two times zero is still zero. That is where we're headed because of the inaction.

I've sat and I've listened to people talk about the whole world is in this situation. You heard me last week say I don't care about the rest of the world; I care about Newfoundland and Labrador right now. I'm a Canadian, I love Canada, but we need a plan.

Industry and the world are going to leave us behind without a plan. Do you know what? There is no plan. It's okay to sit there and say we have to plan. Here's the plan: We'll get 21 people, put them on a task force and let them figure out where to spend \$320 million – for 21 people. Let me tell you something now, we have 13 Cabinet ministers – \$8.5 billion. Thirteen Cabinet ministers can look after \$8.5 billion, but we need 21 people to look after \$320 million and it's going to take months to get there. Tell me how that makes sense. It doesn't make sense to me. I'm sorry.

Men and women are hungry. They're losing their jobs, they're losing their houses and their kids can't go into sports. There are probably people committing suicide but we don't hear it in here.

I listened to the minister yesterday – and in all fairness, he got on a plane and he talked to an individual. Well, I can tell you, I can give you the numbers of the hundred individuals or the 500 mentions on Facebook or the emails that contact my office that struggle about Newfoundland and Labrador first. I can tell you right now, I listened to the Premier last week, which shocked me, out at a signing ceremony talk about the amount of work happening in Corner Brook: 85 per cent and that's acceptable.

I'll tell you about your 85 per cent. Talk to one individual out there who can't put food on his table. Talk to one carpenter, talk to one insulator who doesn't have the money to put his kid in hockey. Talk to one carpenter or one insulator – one. Forget about the other 24, I think, based on the stats, or more, whatever it was he gave yesterday. Forget about all of them, talk to just one. Talk to that man who calls you at 11:30 at night crying or respond to the message at 4 o'clock in the morning from the man who's crying, who doesn't know where he's going to get food to put on his table. That's the situation we're in.

We're in a crisis and we're more concerned about throwing barbs across the table than we are looking for solutions. The last 15 months here have taught me one thing. I thought I had it all figured out at one point, but I can tell you I come in here – and I'm guilty. Me and a couple of ministers over there, we joke back and forth, we barb at each other and we chirp. That's what's supposed to happen here, but we're supposed to get over it.

I can tell you the last 15 months I have a list of stuff that has been debated in this House that was defended 150 per cent by every Member over there, a full list: Canopy Growth, Carla Foote, Gordon McIntosh, McKinsey report, paving, new mental health facility, Charles Bown, *Mitchelmore Report*, recordings from Lake Melville, accusations the Member for Corner Brook made. I've listened to two Members in this House be berated for 15 months and not one person on their own side stood up and defended them – not one. It's shocking.

Then I sat here last week and I listened to what I listened to. It shocks me. It's shameful. You know what? It's actually shameful. I sat here for 15 months and listened to two representatives of this House of Assembly who were female who were berated at every opportunity possible and not a word. It's acceptable, very acceptable. Then, I listened to people stand up and make a point of order on something simple like a word – a donkey, we'll say, as an example.

Madam Speaker, being in this House isn't easy. Some of us are like rotational workers, but I can tell you I believe – and I've said this in the past – there's not one person who enters this hon.

House without honourable intentions. I truly believe that. I believe all the Members in this House are honourable. I think sometimes we get caught up in the theatrics that happen in this House and we forget about what we're here to do, which is represent our people, and we put our parties first. That has been so evident of late.

If anybody can sit in this House and think that this province is in a good situation right now, I'm baffled by it, I have to say. West White Rose, Terra Nova, Henry Goodrich, the refinery. IOC just reported the lowest quarterly earnings that they've ever had because they've reduced stuff. There are mining projects that have been put on hold. All of these things combined and nothing's happening.

Then, we come out with a plan to give laptops to students, which hasn't happened, and we're going to solve all the problems of the education system. Guess what? A lot of places in my district don't have Internet. So if we go back to a shutdown, I don't know how we educate kids. It's not a plan. Again, it's another example of a band-aid where we think it's a plan. That has been the theme time after time after time after time.

There are days when I have gone out in public and I have met people who I don't know, not from my district, and they have asked me what I do for a living. And guess what? I'm almost embarrassed to tell them. I tell you, I do this because I love this province. I got involved in this; I wanted to be an MHA because I didn't think there was a future for my son and my daughter, who I love more than anything.

Everybody in this House sacrifices. Every single person. Everybody who's been involved with government in the past has sacrificed, but I can tell you right now, it's time for us to put all of the BS behind us and start sacrificing together.

People in this province are hurting. They're hungry. They're going to leave, I'm telling you. People don't think they're going to leave. You think that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PARROTT: Tell him I said good morning there.

AN HON. MEMBER: Lions Club.

MR. PARROTT: No worries.

People are going to leave if we don't make a change, and I don't see a plan. I'm telling you, the plan, prior to March, was *Advance 2030*. Prior to everything going so south with COVID, there was a letter written to Ottawa saying how bad a state we're in. We're in a bad state. Nobody here is naïve. We know where we are.

We can sit here and blame it on Muskrat Falls, but guess what? I'll tell you something, we have Muskrat Falls. We own Muskrat Falls or we owe for Muskrat Falls, however you want to look at it, but since 2015 to 2020 there's a five-year construction standpoint. We could have saved a lot of money in the last five years had it been done correctly. There's a lot of blame to go around here.

We can blame it on Muskrat Falls but we've had six years to fix it. We've had six years to make a difference and move this forward. We're not going forward; we're going backwards. We can blame it on COVID, but let me tell you what, in the second week of March when the letter went to Ottawa, COVID had not brought us down; we were there already. So people can mask this and hide it behind COVID all they want, but they're entirely wrong. Now, what we have to do is find a way forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to represent the people of Terra Nova. The people of Terra Nova, in my opinion, deserve better. They deserve jobs, they deserve pavement, they deserve a future and they deserve to know the truth. In my district, I have islands and I have many rural communities that don't have Internet. I have rural communities that have gravel roads that I would say not only don't get maintained adequately, but it's always an uphill battle to get things done.

Those communities are reflective of this province. People don't live in rural Newfoundland because they want to go to the city; they go there because they love it. We have to find a way to make things better. I have

people that live in Butter Cove, a little community with 30 or 40 people. Guess what? They work at the refinery or they're rotational workers. Where do they go now? They're not going anywhere. They're in trouble just like everyone else.

We have an obligation, and I don't know how we meet it, but I will tell you, we have to look at every single individual in this province.

I always joked and laughed at some people don't see past the overpass, and a good example was when they shut down all the school gyms. They shut down all the school gyms outside the overpass while kids inside, in a lot of areas and not because of schools, schools were still shut down, but in a lot of areas there were still programs available to the kids, but the kids that lived outside of the overpass, just because of population, didn't have availability to go to a gym. They couldn't go to Cubs. They couldn't go to Scouts. They couldn't play volleyball. They couldn't play basketball and that's because of the lack of foresight.

The reality is there's only one thing worse than being blind and that's having sight with no vision. That's where we are. We are in a place where we have sight and no vision. That's so sad – so sad.

We sit here as politicians, we make decisions every day and our decisions should be reflective of what we think will happen in 20 years because I can tell you the decisions you make today or the decisions you don't make today, 20 years' from now is when you will look back on them and you will regret them or you will appreciate them. You have to always think about the future and the future of Newfoundland and Labrador right now is at stake. People's lives are at stake and we're in a hard time.

Madam Speaker, when I ran in 2019, I made a decision that I would be open and honest and transparent with people. Like the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, I do my best to return every single phone call. I answer questions whether or not the individuals want to hear that answer. I do my best to be as open and honest and transparent as I can. I think I've done a very good job.

I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the people who got me here. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank my wife, who, I can tell you, and I'm sure everyone here, their spouses have dealt with a lot throughout their careers, not the last year, throughout their careers because it's not all roses for sure. There are a lot of people who think it is but I can guarantee you, it isn't. My children, I want to thank my children. I hope and pray that this House can find a way to find a future for not only my children but future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was privileged to sit here, I guess, as we all say, to represent our district and it's definitely an honour for me to represent the scenic, rural Newfoundland and Labrador district that is absolutely beautiful as well. I'll share that with the –

MR. K. PARSONS: I got a copyright on that now, (inaudible).

AN HON. MEMBER: And the people.

MR. LOVELESS: And the people, absolutely.

Madam Speaker, *Budget 2020*, I guess when you have two communities that are in your district that are mentioned in the budget, it's a good budget. It's a pleasure for me to speak to it today and I'll echo the thoughts of the Member for Baie Verte, that I'll definitely be supporting this budget.

Before I get into talking about some of the responsibilities in the department that I hold and to refer to my district as well, I would like to echo some of the words from the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue. He talked about the colour of collars.

Well, I'm the youngest of nine children that came from a family that didn't have a lot in terms of material things, but the way I look at it is we had it all. You don't need money to be rich. We didn't live a life of luxury but we had a good family. His words about Alberto Wareham and the operation in Arnold's Cove is a real testament of what can be done in this province and is being done. So I echo his words.

But I do take an exception to, I guess, one of this comments that he referenced, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, and the former Member that represented the district that he does now, to say that the former Member was more interested in putting things into the Grand Bank District than his own. Well, I'm telling you, I know the Member for Burin - Grand Bank District and I'm telling you there's no harder working MHA in this House than the Member for Burin - Grand Bank. I just wanted to point that out.

He referenced as well the Member for Terra Nova in terms of COVID-19; I don't think we're making COVID-19 as an excuse. I really don't. COVID-19 is not an excuse; it's an unprecedented world challenge. Not just in this province, it's a world problem that requires world co-operation and solutions.

Madam Speaker, I'll move into the departmental responsibilities. I've been afforded the opportunity to be minister responsible for three important industries in this province: fisheries, forestry and agriculture. It is indeed a privilege to be named minister of that department. I thank the Premier for his confidence in me.

I just want to touch on a few of the industries. We talk about agriculture. Madam Speaker, the Agriculture Sector Work Plan, which was released in October 2019, in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture and Food First NL, targets are set for food self-sufficiency, secondary processing of food products and, of course, employment creation, which is very, very important. Just in the statement I issued today and read in this House about cold storage units on the West Coast and in Labrador, that will certainly assist those farmers and many farmers in the quality of their product as well.

The department also is supporting new and existing farmers; 67 new first farmers to date since 2017. That's a good-news story. For 2021, 14 first-time new entrants have been approved for funding. That funding comes from the province and the feds, providing supports for land development to make more land available for farming. I certainly, in my short period of time there, have gained a greater appreciation for the agriculture sector, who I know the Member opposite knows a lot about and has spent his life doing.

Also, the supports include producing vegetable transplants at the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development in Wooddale, which is very important. That is to help commercial farmers diversify their crops and increase their yields. Also, conducting innovative research on various crops, including apples, grapes, blueberries, partridgeberries, bees and cranberries. I know the Member was on this morning talking about the important work that's going on in this province.

I had the opportunity of visiting the West Coast. The department was doing some experimental work and I had the chance to taste one of the apples as soon as it was picked. By golly, it was delicious. It's great to see that work ongoing. We are also working with experienced beef cattle farmers to produce local superior beef stock to increase food self-sufficiency.

Madam Speaker, my department also supports community gardens. In 2020, to date, there may be more, but the recent number I have is 115 community gardens. That's also to help increase food self-sufficiency. We can't have enough community gardens. I will again reiterate that the supports are from the provincial and federal governments for this important industry, agriculture.

Madam Speaker, I move on to the forestry to make note that it is a valuable industry. I know the Member for Central, there are two, but I know one is certainly interested in this. I know both of them are, and so am I, because I believe it's an industry that has potential. In terms of value, we have a \$380 million value in that industry and 5,000 direct and indirect jobs, which is very important. We talk about jobs,

there are jobs being created and there's potential for more creation.

We have an innovative forestry biomass program to switch from fossil fuels to alternate fuels made of wood biomass beginning at select College of the North Atlantic buildings in Central Newfoundland. I had an opportunity of visiting one of the sawmills to talk about that and they recognize it is very important for the survival of the industry for that particular mill, and mills along the same line.

We have the Forestry Sector Work Plan, which was released in 2019 in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Forestry Industry Association. Consultation with the industry is certainly important. That plan is to find opportunities and remove barriers to support forest sector growth, which is certainly important.

The Forestry Sector Work Plan will strengthen the forest industry. This industry has sustained us for years and I believe it will into the future. This summer we announced \$9.6 million in additional funding to create jobs and develop forest sector product and markets, which is very, very important.

On forestry tree planting, I had an opportunity to be in Corner Brook and participate in a tree planting ceremony with some K to 6 students. They all had a smile on their face, because every time you plant a tree we talk about growth. Planting an additional 2 million seedlings this year for a total of 7.5 million. My thoughts on that is we can never plant enough trees.

Also on forestry, providing financial supports up to 50 per cent of project costs to a maximum of \$100,000 for forest sector businesses to undertake secondary processing, which is very important. That's where it amounts to jobs when we talk about secondary processing. That amounts to finished products – engineered wood products, as an example – millwork, cabinets, furniture, pallets and containers and other wood products. When we get into secondary processing, it does equal jobs.

Madam Speaker, I want to move into another industry in the department that we were founded on, and that's the Department of Fisheries. We

know now it's Fisheries and Aquaculture, but it's the traditional fishery and the new fishery that includes aquaculture. It's an integral component, definitely, of our provincial economy, especially in my district as well, and will be province wide. The industry is employing nearly 16,000 people in 400 communities in harvesting, processing and aquaculture operation. The value of fish and seafood production in 2019 was \$1.4 billion. That's a lot of money contributing to our economy.

The Atlantic Fisheries Fund is certainly supporting big and small enterprises in this province and it supports unions, which is very important for growth in this industry. We know it will enhance the ability to meet growing market demands for sustained, sourced, high-quality fish and seafood products.

The Aquaculture Sector Work Plan in *The Way Forward* was launched in September 2017 – part of *The Way Forward* – committing to growth in the industry. I will talk shortly as it relates to my district and to the Burin Peninsula, and to the province as a whole. By 2022, targets for growth are expected to generate 11,000 person years of employment and help increase food self-sufficiency from 10 to 20 per cent.

Madam Speaker, from the department, I leave the aquaculture topic to move into how aquaculture is important to my district, and there are particular companies that I want to reference. One is Mowi – we refer to them as Marine Harvest – and also Cooke Aquaculture, two big proponents in my district. I want to talk about their involvement in the district, other than just creating employment.

On the employment piece, in Harbour Breton – and Harbour Breton was mentioned in the budget and I thank the Finance Minister and the Premier for mentioning Harbour Breton and St. Alban's in terms of a school being built – the cage building operation that's going on in Harbour Breton right now employs about 60 to 80 people. That's just one spinoff from what's happening in aquaculture in my district and it will definitely reach the Burin Peninsula district. It's happening there in terms of the construction and I look forward to the outcomes there as well.

They provide employment, but they're also involved in the communities. Mowi, they actually helped out the Food Sharing Association in St. John's as well back some time ago; helping the community from that perspective. They support baseball teams. They help with schools for learning around the community growth, community gardens. It's not just about the jobs. While they're very, very important, no doubt, but the community involvement is very important because its presence is there in the community.

I want to speak, Madam Speaker, about benefits of industry at home. Mowi puts out a magazine here and a family unit was mentioned in that magazine; it's Murray and Ashley Bungay. It's a father and daughter dynamic duo that work in the industry and it is family, local employment. She's a graduate of Memorial University, coming home and finding employment in a rural district. The common theme, I guess, from the interview of the father and daughter was that I get an opportunity to work with my father. I get an opportunity to work with my daughter and we get to go home every evening; we're home with our families, which is certainly very important.

Those are jobs that are being created in rural Newfoundland and Labrador in the aquaculture industry and it's important to talk about that because the sky is not falling, according to the Member for Terra Nova.

In referencing Cooke Aquaculture, which is another company in the district, they operate a plant in Hermitage which operated throughout the pandemic and did so successfully, but with some challenges, no doubt. As with the other company I mentioned, family working in industry; I have family as well working in the industry with Cooke Aquaculture. They are very happy with having the opportunity because they've spent most of their lifetime away, being away from family, but now they're home. We're home every evening is the common theme from people that are working in industry. There's a lot to be said for that.

I even have a mayor, Mayor Steward May of Belleoram, he works in the industry with Cooke Aquaculture and a very hard-working individual for that company, for the industry and certainly for his community and the region. There's other

mayors in my district that work very hard as well.

Cooke Aquaculture, again, the growing of fish is one part of their operation, but even on land they have the hatchery in St. Alban's. I visited St. Alban's last week and chatted with Sheldon George, the manager there. The benefits of the industry – they had a big vessel in their warehouse that they were repairing, welders there, people employed, another example of jobs in that industry. They also, in co-operation with the traditional fishermen, allowed them to bring their boats on their land to do repairs, which is co-operation that's important for the aquaculture and the traditional industry to be co-operating.

Cooke is also involved in the community, as well as the other company, and that's good to see. I attended a Christmas party that they held back some years ago. It was certainly positive and everyone was definitely in a positive mood and very proud of the employment opportunities that they are getting in a rural district of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Speaker, I'm privileged to have those two aquaculture companies in my district providing jobs and a future for the South Coast. The future is bright. The bottom is not out of her. The sky is not falling.

The same will happen for the Burin Peninsula, and we need to talk more about the aquaculture industry and the potential that it has for this province.

I say to the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, because of the aquaculture industry there are benefits in his district and there are jobs in his district because of that industry. Again, I say the sky is not falling.

The Department of FFA – if I can use that – certainly has a presence in my district, the Centre for Aquaculture Health and Development, employing people in the community and in and around St. Alban's.

Summing it up, the industry reaches many communities in my district, from St. Alban's down to Pool's Cove, Rencontre East, Harbour Breton, Hermitage and all the way to François. I have had constituents reach out to say they are

renting their homes to workers in the aquaculture industry providing opportunities for them. Hotels are getting business, gas stations are getting business, restaurants and so on, so it is positive news, no doubt. I believe the future is bright in this industry and in many industries in this province and certainly believe there will be much more in the future.

Madam Speaker, I only have a couple of minutes, I just want to mention, in terms of others, money invested in my district in terms of brush cutting, which is important for the safety of people operating on those roads. There's some roadwork done, not enough, I need more.

We talk about health care. I was certainly challenged back a couple of months ago during the pandemic of losing the doctors in the Bay d'Espoir clinic for a period of time. It was challenging. I thank all the staff, certainly, at the clinic in Bay d'Espoir at the Connaigre health care centre in Harbour Breton, our paramedics, ambulance operators and those that organize it and administrate it, and community leaders and committees that were set up to work our way through that challenging time.

I look forward to working with all towns, local service districts and also the Miawpukek First Nation band council in Conne River under the leadership of Chief Mi'sel Joe and his council. I look forward to working with them as well.

My colleagues, Ministers Dempster and Warr – sorry I didn't mean to say the names – were in my district last week. It was a great visit and we had a chance to visit the students and even play a little volleyball and some basketball. Their community model is the model for all of us.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to clue up by saying the future for Newfoundland and Labrador is bright. I don't need to slam my fist to Ottawa, we will get it done and the future of Newfoundland and Labrador is bright.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers. Further speakers? Going once, going twice.

The hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This is a real pleasure to be able to stand up and represent the people of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi in this very important budget.

Madam Speaker, we have heard a great deal about a pile of initiatives that are coming with this budget. A raft of task forces, many of which are as yet undefined, that are going to chart the course for our future, but we did not see any of that in the budget. In fact, I believe one of my initial comments on this budget was that it was practically a map of last year's budget or we are staring directly at last year's budget, which, in fact, I believe I am quoted as saying it was devoid of any creativity. If one was to go through the budget of this year, you would find that we hear very little of anything that has new spending or new initiatives and often what we have seen is a repetition of things that have already happened.

What I find there is that it does not reflect the substantially different set of circumstances that we faced today. As I was analyzing the budget, I did find that many of the things leave us vastly unprepared for the economic and social circumstances that we are facing this very instant.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I have a number of things that I would like to bring up, many issues that I have found during the course of the Estimates process that are rather egregious and disappointing.

In fact, I have just recently found out that our savings or our expenditures on immigration have decreased quite substantially. I note that we need immigration because our population is declining. Not only is our population declining, Madam Speaker, but our population is also aging. It's not that we have a whole lot of young people here; we have, in fact, a great number of people who have aged. I think, in fact, I am the average age of our population. I can tell you without a doubt that I am well past child-bearing years.

Our population, unless we have some initiatives to encourage individuals to come to our province

to have children and to settle down and want to stay here, to want to raise their families, create a life, buy a home, raise their children, start businesses and be contributing members of our society as well as our economy, then we need to do a much better job of encouraging that to happen. One of the ways is to not cut funding for immigration.

In fact, Madam Speaker, there are a variety of other things that I find somewhat egregious and are counterintuitive to encouraging individuals to have children. In fact, I found out just yesterday that we have almost \$200,000 available for young women who need additional nutrition during their pregnancies and during postpartum; however, for some reason we have not been able to distribute all of that \$200,000. You'd think \$200,000 towards maternal and infant nutrition ought to be easy to disperse.

This is incomprehensible to me. I do believe my quote during the Estimates process was that made me weep a bit when I heard we couldn't give this money away because the threshold for giving that money out was that you had to make less than \$26,000 a year as a household – \$26,000. So you're having a baby; you're making less than \$26,000 a year and you get \$60 a month – \$60 a month – to improve your nutrition to be able to have a healthy child. Somehow that does not bode well with me. That does not give the appropriate nutrition to these women, nor does it provide a good starting point for those children.

Let's step forward one extra step. If you managed to make it through that and you either immigrated or you've had a child and you haven't needed to take advantage of these things, well let's talk about the \$25-a-day child care initiative now. The roll out of that, and a great conceptual idea, lovely conceptual idea. However, what we've seen is it is now being given to child care operators, and these are regulated child care operators.

This is not necessarily the individuals who are making a lower income that are going to be able to access this directly and they can then individually choose where they want to place their child or how they want to place their child. They are not being supported in that manner. Instead, they have to go to a particular child care

provider and hope that they fit in under the right set of circumstances.

I know we had some debate back and forth in the House about: we said the \$25-a-day child care was a good idea and we said the \$25-a-day child care was a great idea. Well, in fact, Madam Speaker, every one of us in this House have agreed to the conceptual idea that low-cost child care will encourage individuals to have more children and encourage participation in the workplace.

What I take exception with, Madam Speaker, is the fact that New Democrats have always said we want affordable, accessible, universally available child care. That has manifested into the concept of \$25-a-day child care. That's good because it's a notional concept, and \$25 a day doesn't seem overwhelming to absolutely anyone unless maybe you're making \$25,000 or \$26,000 a year.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I just read an article this afternoon. CBC was so gracious as to say, how does a family of four, in Newfoundland and Labrador, making \$63,000 a year survive? How do they do that? As I was looking through the breakdown of expenditures I noticed they were making \$64,000 a year and they spent \$1,000 or \$1,100 a month on child care. To compare that, they were spending \$1,300 a month on their rent. So \$25-a-day child care would help that a little bit but still makes it almost unattainable.

In fact, if we are talking about the individuals who are starting off their careers, who are in low-wage occupations and who are wanting to have babies early so that they can help raise them and they have the energy to do that, \$25-a-day child care costs \$125 a week. If you are making minimum wage, almost all of your one week's wage will almost cover all of your child care for a month.

It's pretty easy to see how someone who is making less than a living wage, making less than \$15 an hour is going to be able to make the choice of saying: I want to go to work but I have to pay for clothes and I have to pay for transportation and I have to have somewhere where my child can be and be well cared for and nurtured along the way. So I don't think the \$25-

a-day child care is exactly what we want to encourage more people to have more children.

Madam Speaker, here's another little thing about the budget – oh, Mr. Speaker. Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. COFFIN: Very sneaky.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out to you a little bit about how the budget has worked and some of the discussions we've had. As we are all acutely aware, we are in a minority government situation. We, as the New Democratic caucus, as the balance of power in this minority government administration, have taken upon ourselves over the last 15 months, with a great deal of diligence and perseverance and, in fact, enthusiasm, have attempted to work with the Liberal government to shore up our political system, but also to encourage and incorporate New Democrat ideas into budgets and policies.

In fact, since day one when we started negotiating, I do believe, in June of 2019, one of the first things we had on the table was \$25-a-day child care. Mr. Speaker, I will say the minister of Finance at that time enthusiastically embraced the concept and said: Yes, we will do this. We worked with them and said: Yes, we'd like this; let's see what else we can do. In doing that, we could perhaps support a budget that contained some reasonable ideas.

Mr. Speaker, in February, that very same minister of Finance came to us with hat in hand and said: I'm sorry, we cannot afford \$25-a-day child care. I'm sorry, New Democratic caucus, we cannot do that. So that's not happening. Then, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, less than a month later we're told that the person who would eventually become the Premier wanted \$25-a-day daycare and magically has manifested in the budget. I am really confused as to who's claiming the child care and why or why not we can afford such a thing. What I will say is the rollout of it is inadequate.

Mr. Speaker, I find – there's so much, and if you've read my notes, it's difficult to choose which thing to go to next. Perhaps let's chat a little bit about something else that I've learnt along the way. Mr. Speaker. I have discovered

that while we are looking at a P3 for building our new mental health facility, as well as our new prison facility, those P3s have a raft of problems associated with that. In fact, we haven't had an appropriate answer to many of my P3 questions, but it will be very interesting to see what the stream of payments will be on all of these institutions because what we've only done is taken the debt from the cost of building these and moved it onto a stream of payments into the future. We still have to pay that back, we're just not going to see it on our balance sheets, so it's a really lovely way of hiding things.

Mr. Speaker, I have also found out during the course of Estimates that as we are considering building this new penitentiary, there has been some consideration of bringing in federal prisoners from other jurisdictions to serve their federal time in our provincial penitentiary. Conceptually, this is reasonable, I suppose, because housing federal prisoners in our provincial prison system will generate \$300 a day and, of course, that's going to help offset the cost.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask about some of the other considerations that would be involved in housing federal prisoners in White Hills in St. John's. One of the concerns I had immediately was where would they serve their parole? Would these individuals be serving parole in St. John's or anywhere in Newfoundland and Labrador? If so, if they are going to do that, would the appropriate mechanisms be put in place to ensure that money is there to have the proper support for the individuals who are transitioning out of the prison system? Of course, that question was unable to be answered.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has caused me a bit of concern throughout this whole process is the mechanism by which the Liberal government has chosen to engage or collaborate with the Opposition, and any of us here in the Opposition, whether it's the Official Opposition, whether it's the New Democratic caucus or whether it's the independent Members here. It's as if the Liberal government does not realize they are in a minority government situation.

They offer to listen to our suggestions as if it was their option to say: That's a lovely

suggestion but we choose not to take it because you don't know the whole situation. So you can keep throwing your suggestions out at us but father really does know best. You keep giving us your suggestions and we'll let you know when you hit on a good one.

Mr. Speaker, that is utterly unacceptable. If we are to govern in a minority government situation, there needs to be a tangible and deliberate mechanism for engaging all MHAs to address the most significant social and economic set of circumstances that we are facing in this province today, and that is non-existent. In fact, we have a task force that is being chaired by a volunteer who gets to write their own terms of reference and choose whoever their board members are.

Mr. Speaker, we are the elected officials in this House of Assembly and we are not even being given the opportunity to participate in developing the recommendations for our own recovery in this province. How on earth is that a reasonable task force? Is the Liberal government abdicating their responsibility? Are they choosing not to make decisions by letting someone else make those decisions for them and then having those recommendations come to the House of Assembly, when we might be able to ask questions?

Speaking on behalf of my party, I get five minutes to ask questions on the most important topics facing this province today. That is unacceptable and it is not the way that this province ought to be run, nor is it the way that our economic recovery ought to be handled, Mr. Speaker.

There are a variety of other things. I've gone on long enough about that.

I have found out that there is a little pocket of money in Immigration, Skills and Labour that has no criteria associated with it and it is essentially discretionary. I know it's just a tiny pot of money, but, Mr. Speaker, I found one and I'm looking, so how many more are there? I have not been to all of the Estimates, yet. I am not allowed to see the books and I am not being consulted on any of this. How is this appropriate, Mr. Speaker?

I don't have nearly enough time to go on about some of the economic circumstances that we face.

Mr. Speaker, this reactionary budget, this budget that is devoid of any creativity, this budget that cuts –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. COFFIN: I may.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. COFFIN: – our immigration; if this budget is fool enough to cut our immigration budget, is fool enough to cut out many of the opportunities and the intelligence and the suggestions and the experience and education that is embodied by every single MHA, then I really don't think that this budget represents or is an appropriate representation of what is needed by this province at this time.

Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of bads, and when I say bads, I mean, poor distribution of income, ill affordability of housing, food insecurity, abject poverty. The people that I see in my district live hand to mouth on the street. We have created many of these situations because we forgot to pay attention to the bads that came with economic expansion. We have done nothing about gangs. We have done nothing about drug use. We have done nothing about the sex trade. These things exist in our society and they are causing a great many other problems but we haven't even said the words in the House of Assembly, let alone formulated any kind of policy to address that, yet we still turn and say we want to go all in on a boom scenario once again and we again forget about those bads.

Mr. Speaker, I hear time and time again, it is important to support the oil industry. Absolutely, the people working in that industry deserve respect. They work very hard and we ought not to turn our backs on a huge stream of revenue. However, at the same time, we are turning our backs on fact, Mr. Speaker.

I hear time and time again, we have trapped assets which means that there is going to be oil in the ground. We might know it is there but we are unable to take it because we are going to

ruin our climate. I will guarantee you that we will see the climate effects and the environmental effects if we do not pay attention to those trapped assets, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if we do not pay attention to things like the projections of BP oil who says that the demand for oil, at its best, is going to be flat and in its moderate scenario is going to decline.

Mr. Speaker, while we have the cleanest oil, in spite of the oxymoron that is, in spite of that, we have the cleanest oil. Unless we are willing to sell it at the cheapest price, with the laxest labour laws and the most devoid environmental regulations, those will become trapped assets.

We need to look at how the price of food is increasing and how our electricity costs are increasing and how individuals in our districts have \$40 to live on once they pay for their rent. There are some fundamental problems in our economy that are being utterly ignored in the construct of this budget and it is grossly inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, I would look forward to the day when we have a new budget that is more fulsome and has a greater recognition of the actual circumstances that we see in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to have a few words on the budget. First of all, I just want to thank the people of Humber - Bay of Islands for their support and their continued support.

I'll just remind the Leader of the Third Party, the Opposition, there are independent Members here who has the balance of power. I know you like to stand up and say how much the balance of power but the last deciding votes for the government were from the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and myself. So I think if you're going to include everybody, you should

include everybody, just not exclude other people.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank – with COVID, another thing, the front-line workers for this pandemic. I know I heard it on many occasions before that everybody in this House is appreciative of all the work of the front-line workers. I know a lot of them personally, and I'm sure every Member in this House knows a lot of those front-line workers personally. I just want to recognize their work that got us all through this pandemic.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is a different time for everybody. This is not normal times and we must think outside the box. We must understand the issues that are facing all of us as parliamentarians and government itself. I'll just give you a good example, look at how this is intertwined in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador with the rest of the world. With the fires in California, there are supplies here in Newfoundland and Labrador that were brought, four and five tractor-trailers, bought here and sent down to California.

The price of materials now, if someone is going to build a house or repairs, has doubled and tripled in many cases. So we are intertwined with the rest of the world. This is a prime example, right to the core of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to do renovations at their home or build a new home or do other things.

It's very easy as an independent to stand up to any government right now and say here's what you're doing wrong. It's difficult for any government to be governing any province in Canada right now, and even with the federal government. It is extremely difficult. It's easy to criticize. It's easy to say you're doing all of this wrong, here's what you should be doing. What are you doing with the excess funds you have?

Mr. Speaker, I say to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are going to be changes and there has to be changes in Newfoundland and Labrador to get our deficit under control, but it is difficult times for the government and we need to recognize that. I said it before and I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker, the easiest thing to do is sit back and criticize. One of the hardest things to do is give concrete

examples of what you would do to help out. So to the government Members and to the ministers, it is difficult times and we all must work together.

One thing I'll bring up is rate mitigation. I know I heard this a lot lately when there was a new task force set up to ensure we got all of the information together to bring to Ottawa. I can ensure you from the former, former premier and the government is that a lot of people were of the understanding that rate mitigation was almost ready to go. We were waiting any day for a decision. To find out that wasn't done and to find out that we're starting a committee to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador is going to get all their ducks in order to bring it off up to Ottawa, I can tell you that the former premier led us down the garden path.

I'm sure there are a lot of Members that weren't in on the rate mitigation discussions agree with me and I can assure you many people across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador agree with me because I heard: I thought this was done. Well, they were ready to announce it. They had this big announcement about rate mitigation. Minister Seamus O'Regan was down to the announcement, and we had this big announcement ready to go.

What it was, we were going to continue on with negotiations. Everybody thought, now we find out that Newfoundland and Labrador never even had what they were requesting to bring to Ottawa. So that was a big letdown. That was a big letdown for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I can say, personally, I received many calls and I spoke to many, many people about that.

That's the kind of thing that makes people in the province skeptical, is when we're led to believe that something is going to happen because of an increase in electricity in the province and Muskrat Falls and all the other contributing factors, and we find out that no, no, that wasn't what we were told. It's a big letdown to a lot of people, Mr. Speaker.

If there's something I can advise the government – there's even someone else calling me now about rate mitigation, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, if there's something I'll advise the government, if they want to take any advice whatsoever, and I said it here in this House and I'll say it again, what Clyde Wells said back in 1992. He said: Understand that the people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador understand the fiscal situation we're in and be honest with them and be upfront.

That's my advice to government, because government is in a tough bind, Mr. Speaker, very tough. I don't care, be it Liberal, PC, NDP that are on the government side, they're in a tough bind. I can assure you that. I remember those words from Clyde Wells, Mr. Speaker, and they have always stuck with me. That's my only advice to government: If you're going to make any tough decisions, be honest with the people, be upfront with the people and, Mr. Speaker, people understand. People really do understand.

Just to go back to that; in 1992, in the fall, and in the budget of '93, when Clyde Wells was honest and upfront and did what he had to for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to put them on a solid footing, he won more seats in '93 than he had in 1989, because people understood. That's my advice to government. I don't know the inner workings of all the budgetary finances of the province because each department has its own, but if there's any advice I would give to government – and I hope people will adhere to it – it's to be honest, upfront and go out and explain why you need to do what you do, and then have open dialogue with the people in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I'll speak about the hospital in Corner Brook again and the workers. I always said one of my proudest days of being a parliamentarian is the first person that receives radiation at Corner Brook hospital, doesn't have to come in here for that dreaded disease, and be able to be with family at home in Corner Brook or Western Newfoundland; be able to drive and that they can do that. That is on track. I'm grateful for that.

I brought up local workers, Mr. Speaker, and we do what we can. I'll just let the House know, I know the Premier was out last week and he said that he wasn't aware of the issue. He is aware of

the issue now. I'm confident he was aware before, but whatever. I'm not here to criticize.

I'm not sure, is it because of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Premier or it's the protest being brought up in the House of Assembly; the carpenter's union is having a meeting today with a company from Quebec. It was delayed there until about 12 or 1 o'clock. So they are having a meeting to discuss to see what they can do to hire the local workers at the area.

I say to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure that if there's anything you can do there to help with this here, because they are meeting, probably as we speak, because when I was talking to them earlier it had to be delayed. If there's anything you can do, I say to the minister or to the Premier, to help facilitate this and get local people working, I appreciate it and I know the workers will appreciate it. So there is movement, Mr. Speaker.

Also, I have to recognize that the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans also brought this up and the Member for Terra Nova brought this up also a couple of times. So there is movement there; there is a meeting today. Let's all work together somehow to try to help whatever we can do here today, Mr. Speaker, to help keep local people home.

I said it before, Mr. Speaker, this budget here is a situation where, of course, we had two Interim Supplies. I heard the Minister of Finance read out in the budget that we're not going to make any major decisions now. It's almost like saying, okay, we're going to wait until March, April next year to make the decisions, when there's a possibility – and I'll give you one example when I was part of the government, it was never acted upon after.

It was to bring ABCs in line with government employees and bring their benefits in line, what we can bring back into government to help save money. Because the information that we had at the time back in 2016, 2017 when we set out our plan was that it would save hundreds of millions of dollars. That's one that, if we're going to keep kicking down the road, it's one that's going to keep adding to our deficit. That's something that we had the plan in place, and I can't comment

on what happened after in 2018, but it was the plan to do it. It was a plan to do it.

There are some agencies, boards and commissions here where some tradespeople are making more than the Premier of the province by the time they add in their salaries and other things, they make more than the Premier of the province. Yet, you get the same tradespeople out in the hospital in Corner Brook who are making about, say, \$150,000, \$160,000; they're making \$60,000 or \$70,000, \$75,000. Some of the boards and commissions which we identified that could be brought into the government and to save hundreds of millions of dollars, but if you keep kicking it down the road, the deficit is going to get higher.

That's something that I urge the government to look at strongly to bring it in the next budget. I thought it would be in this budget, but it wasn't – to bring it in the next budget that would save. If you save \$100 million, \$200 million next year; 30 years that's almost \$1 billion that you would have saved.

It's a big savings to the province, a big savings and having it kicked down the road, Mr. Speaker, won't help.

I noticed, and I have to speak to this because I know a bit about municipal affairs and environment, when the department was changed around. I don't know what the rationale was behind that but I can say that, in my opinion, it will not service the municipalities of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador as good as it could. Now, Mr. Speaker, what's going to take a priority? If you have all the engineering services over in Transportation and Infrastructure, which, Mr. Speaker, I always said is too big anyway, for one person to handle. Transportation and Infrastructure is a huge, huge department.

Now, take more services and put in Transportation and Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, puts a great burden on the staff, great burden on the minister, all the executive. Now, for example, Mr. Speaker, what's going to have a priority, a school or some small town that needs a \$60,000, \$70,000, \$100,000 engineering job done? It's simple.

Now, the applications that come in, Mr. Speaker, goes to Transportation and Infrastructure and then they're going to come back to – they have to do an assessment in municipal affairs, do an assessment on their ability to pay and be able to put in their cost share and then they have to send it back to Transportation and Infrastructure for it.

That's one that I personally feel that will hinder the larger municipalities. St. John's, Mount Pearl, Corner Brook, they have their own engineering; most have some of their own engineering staff, but there are smaller ones that don't. It's going to be an issue and you're going to see more delays and it's a lesser priority. I just want to urge government to have a look at that, or someone explain the rationale behind that because, Mr. Speaker, I just feel that it's a tough time.

As an Opposition and then as two independents, we look at government and say, well, you have to do this, this and this. Mr. Speaker, we got the circular today about the MCW, Municipal Capital Works, and the federal program, except say probably for the major towns, there wouldn't be an MHA here who was going to be talking to the ministers and say we want money for our district. Yet, we're going to stand on this side and say, look, we want our money, but don't cut where we want the money. That's the dilemma government is in – that's the dilemma that the government is in.

We got to recognize that, as Opposition, there are changes that we can make in government, there's positive suggestions that we can make, Mr. Speaker, but once we get the applications in from our towns, we're all going to be looking for something for our towns. Then government has to say yes or no, or find some money to put in the Capital Works program or put in the cost share with the federal program for the roads, the infrastructure, buildings that we're all going to be asking for. So balance the situation. When they ask a question about how you're spending so much, then walk across and ask the Members opposite about getting some funding for your district, we have to understand that. Let's look at new ways that we can do things because it is for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I know I heard some people talking about the flooding that was done recently and I know there was some down in the Placentia area. I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was working with the Mayor of Placentia, Bernie Power, on that. I recognize that because I had a few calls on it: What's the best approach to do it? I know the minister was working with Mayor Bernie Power on the floods there and that got to be recognized.

Mr. Speaker, we mentioned earlier about the oil and gas. We all know that we should sometimes try to get away from the oil and gas, the pollution, but right now it is the big economic driver in our province for the workers, for the income, for the government and also for the taxes. We got to recognize it.

I know it was brought up in this House and I know the minister of industry and development is listening there intently about it. I know he is working hard at it, but it's all of our rights, all of our duties, also, to keep it in the forefront because we are dealing with people, dealing with families. It is a situation where we got to keep it in the forefront. I know the minister is working hard at it. He was very diligent in the work that he did over the past and I'm sure this won't be no different.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak for a few minutes on the District of Humber - Bay of Island. I heard today some questions about money coming out for roadwork. I'm not usually the one to nag people or to be aggravating towards people or be too aggressive on people, but I got to say the Humber - Bay of Island, especially with a lot of the floods in 2018, that this year the former minister of transportation and works and now the current Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has put in Route 450, a very safe highway.

I know there was one piece of work out on Bottle Cove Road that was flooded out at the time that wasn't done. I know the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure went out himself, personally – the current minister – and they had a look at it and just funded it. So we have that, because with washout, the Bottle Cove Road would washout the houses. I just have to recognize the stuff that's being done

also. It's easy to stand and criticize, Mr. Speaker.

Also, in Transportation and Infrastructure with the schools and the busing in the schools – I already recognized the former minister, who I dealt with and was very supportive of the schools, and the current minister with the busing. It took a while. I think there are only one or two cases we have now that can't get on the buses. I have to recognize that they always said it's going to take time to work out. I have to recognize the former minister of Education, the Member for Green Bay, and the current minister now. They're open; they're accessible. Every concern we had, they sat down and listened.

We couldn't get everything, because some things we were asking were just impossible. There is only one or two now that I brought to the minister's attention recently that he is working on. I have to say that in September, at the big rush and the big controversy about school busing, these two individuals helped the people of the district, through me, to help alleviate a lot of the concerns and a lot of concerns in the school which were done. I have to recognize that also for the two ministers.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just close on this with the Humber - Bay of Islands area. The people in Humber - Bay of Islands, with Clyde Wells at the time, understood the situation they were in. They supported Clyde Wells, even with the necessary steps he had to make in 1993. I just want to remind people of that, 1993. When Clyde Wells was the Member for Bay of Islands at the time in 1989, he had public meetings and he said we're going to make tough decisions. They voted him back with a bigger majority in the district itself because he was so honest with them.

I'm sure all the people around every district, Mr. Speaker, understand what needs to be done, how to do it, but let's be honest with the people. Let's do it in a way that we do the least possible harm to people in this province. Let's not stop; let's not forget the lesson. Vulnerable people in this province, Mr. Speaker, they are the ones that need more help than anybody.

I'll just close with this, Mr. Speaker: Thank you to the people of Humber - Bay of Islands for your continued support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'll just take a few minutes actually to speak about *Budget 2020* before we close out for the day.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, like I guess all hon. Members here in the House, I want to take the opportunity to thank the residents of my District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde for the honour to sit here and serve them. Reflecting as you go through this process, it seems like really only yesterday I came here, but I'm headed into my seventh year. Time goes pretty quick, but never missing the fact that I serve at the pleasure of the people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

Also, going through COVID for the last seven or eight months now, I want to take the opportunity to thank all the front-line workers, not only in Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: – but throughout the province for what they've done for us. It's important, even in what they continue to do, but if you think about the services they provided early on in COVID in March, April and May when there was that heightened level of uncertainty – and the work that my colleague, Minister Haggie and Dr. Fitzgerald and former Premier Ball and our current Premier have done in getting us to where we are as a province. I think that's what gives us that extra level of certainty right now as we move forward through COVID-19 into the next stages.

One of the things I had the opportunity to do this morning was talk to Eastern Health in Carbonear about the flu clinics and how important those

clinics will be this year to the people throughout the province. It's very encouraging to see the number of clinics that are going to happen, not only in my district but in the districts throughout the province this year, with the added layer of our community pharmacies being able to actually administer the flu shot, our doctors back administering the flu shot and extra clinics.

It really shows and it certainly gives everybody a level of confidence. Looking at the approach that the Department of Health has taken this year with the flu shot should really give a vote of confidence to people or a level of confidence to people at home of our ability to administer a COVID vaccine when it becomes available. I think the health authorities should be commended for the work they're doing, not only with the flu shot this year, but their planning for what would happen once we get to a vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, I could spend the entire afternoon talking about the great work that's happening around the district I represent, whether it's the redevelopment of the third floor at the Carbonear hospital, all kinds of groups doing work. We had a very successful, in COVID times, I think fishery this year. There were challenges, but the men and women that prosecute that industry did a tremendous job for what we had to go through this year.

Mr. Speaker, a Member earlier today, I think it was the Member for Burin - Placentia West, actually raised cellphone coverage. I can tell you that as somebody that has been here now for a few years and spent some time on that side of the House, that has always been an issue that's been near and dear to me in my district. I live in a district that's an hour and 15 minutes outside of St. John's, and we still have large portions of the Bay de Verde Peninsula that don't have cell coverage.

I can tell you, the minister behind me who would now have that into his portfolio, and I have had many chats about it, many conversations, but there's one encouraging thing here. Just last year when the Department of Justice along with the former department of transportation and works, actually did a proposal for a new radio system in the province to support our front line workers, our police, our fire departments, our ambulance services.

One of the components of that RFP, RFQ, was that any new radio system have capacity for expanded cell phone service because it is so important and I look forward to a time when we don't have to have this conversation any more, because it is an important conversation and one I've never shied away from.

We've been back here now, I guess, three and a half weeks, debating the important issues of the day, very important issues if you think about the challenges that are faced in our oil industry. Living on the south side of Trinity Bay, I often see larger pieces of floating vessels, whether it's a platform or a ship going up Trinity Bay into Bull Arm. I can look directly across and see the mouth of Bull Arm and the impacts that that has on each and every one of us.

Sometimes, and I understand the role of the Opposition, but it's important that everybody remembers that at the end of the day, there's none of us in this House that are not effected by or don't know somebody that's effected by the oil industry and the downturn.

I know the work that the previous minister has done on this file, and the current minister, it's a file that we're all seriously, seriously concerned with.

I think about it sometimes; we talk about it's a global downturn, and it is. I have friends that are displaced because of the downturn in the oil industry. I actually have a sister-in-law who's a pilot, who's lost her job. She lost her job in March with no idea when she would go back to work with a major airline. Those things are concerning as we go forward for each and every one of us in this House.

I don't think there's one person in here that, if they could snap their fingers today and get us back to an economy where the airlines and the oil industry were back running as they were running in February or early March, wouldn't snap those fingers. Unfortunately, we can't do that. It's not a snap of the fingers. Newfoundland and Labrador – Canada for that fact – can't control the oil markets and can't control oil prices.

I'm the father of two post-secondary young sons and I certainly want opportunity in

Newfoundland and Labrador for them as much as anybody here. I looked back this afternoon, actually, at the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL with a baby there, 13 or 14 days old and I think about his future. He's sitting here in this Chamber long before most, but you think about his future and the decisions that we make here are for his future. He's 14 days old and he's sitting on the floor of the House of Assembly. I think, at the end of the day, we all do this for the right reasons.

This is Small Business Week and I mentioned earlier COVID and front-line workers. Well, many, many people that operate small businesses were those front-line workers back in the heights of COVID, so thank you to them. Never before, in a Small Business Week, has it been more important that – we always use the adage, I guess, small business is the backbone of communities. We saw that more than ever, I think, in the early stages and even in these stages of COVID. I don't think there was a time in history that it was ever proven the value of small businesses to our communities.

It's also Innovation Week. If you see some of the things that we're doing here in this province in innovation. I know the minister responsible and I have had a few chats around it in the last few days. He comes back, actually, from touring some of these facilities and talking about the opportunities that are here in this province in innovation. Innovation in lots of ways starts off as small business and we hope it grows.

Mr. Speaker, my time is winding down for today, but, again, I want to thank the people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde for the opportunity to serve them. I'll get lots of chances in the coming weeks to actually have some comments about the budget and talk about some of the great things happening in my district, as I'm sure other Members will, but for right now, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, 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 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.