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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Government House Leader ready? Yes.

The Opposition House Leader ready? Third Party House Leader ready?

Order, please!

Before we begin Routine Proceedings today, I would like to observe an old parliamentary tradition.

I have the pleasant task of formally welcoming the Member who was duly elected in the by-election of October 6, 2020.

The Member is Mr. Andrew Furey, representing the District of Humber - Gros Morne. I have been advised by the House of Assembly that the Member has taken the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown as required by the *Constitution Act, 1867*, and the Oath of Office as required by the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* and has signed the Members' Roll.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my privilege and honour to introduce Dr. Andrew Furey, Member of the House of Assembly for Humber - Gros Morne. He's here to claim his seat.

MR. SPEAKER: Congratulations.

Let the Member take his seat.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. the Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Placentia West -

Bellevue, Placentia - St. Mary's, Conception Bay South and Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, farming on the Eastport Peninsula has a long history. In the 1930s, the Eastport Peninsula Agricultural Exhibition began. After a short break, it was established again in the '90s. They recently celebrated their 32nd anniversary.

Within the COVID guidelines and creative planning, a 12-committee group was able to host a successful event, all because of community effort and involvement. On the 10th of October, the event was started with one of the largest parades they'd ever seen. Each year, a different tree is planted at the cenotaph. This year's tree, a larch, was planted in recognition of first responders, front-line workers and essential workers.

The origin of Eastport and Sandringham can be traced back to their agricultural roots and their farmers. Unfortunately, the physical display, which they normally do, of produce and home gardens, could not take place this year, but thanks to Tonya Lane there was a virtual presentation of all the local produce.

An outdoor farmers market with 23 vendors was hosted by the recreation committee and the kids soapbox derby was a huge success with over 20 participants and was the highlight of the day. The effort to continue some of the annual events was evident in the community spirit.

Please join me in congratulating the Eastport Peninsula Agricultural Committee and the local community involvement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I speak of an event I had the pleasure of taking part in, the Burin Peninsula Health Care Foundation 2020 annual radiothon. The organization was eager to host this year's event,

as it was held a little different than normal with the COVID guidelines, with virtual presentations and scheduled in-person presentations. I personally attended via telephone.

The Burin Peninsula Health Care Foundation successfully raised \$135,000 while in the midst of an ongoing pandemic, making this radiothon a huge accomplishment.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, the words of Vanessa Jackman, the executive director of the Burin Peninsula Health Care Foundation: I am so humbled to have witnessed the outpouring of generosity from both our residents on the Burin Peninsula and all our volunteers who made this event happen. I echo those sentiments.

These donations will assist our local health care initiatives on the Burin Peninsula improving the health services we require.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating all the volunteers, supporters with donations and especially the foundation's board members for their efforts this year. You are the many reasons for this awesome achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On September 20, 1965, a young teacher by the name of Ms. Uriel Whalen was a boarder in the Gaskiers, St. Mary's Bay, at the Critch residence. Angus Kielly took every opportunity that year to visit his aunt's house.

On October 17, 1970, Uriel and Angus were married. They had five children, two daughters and three sons, and today have nine grandchildren, all boys. Angus retired from working as a heavy equipment mechanic in 2002 and Uriel retired from her teaching career in 2003.

Angus and Uriel are very involved with the seniors' association, attending card games, dances and fundraisers. They both attend church and have a strong faith.

On Saturday past, I visited Mr. and Mrs. Kielly at their home in the Gaskiers.

Today, as the Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, I would like to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Kielly on the celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last Saturday evening, I, along with my colleague the MHA for Windsor Lake, had the pleasure of attending Justin Fancy's livestream album release show at the GlenDenning Golf Course in St. John's.

This was a great evening highlighting lots of wonderful talent in our province. The show was hosted, actually, by award-winning Canadian actor-comedian Shaun Majumder, Dustin Parsons from Saltwater Noise, along with special guest Chris Ryan.

This local boy from Conception Bay South is a country music artist preparing to hit the national stage with the release of his debut album: *Sure Beats A Good Time*.

Justin is a local singer-songwriter who once was a contestant on *Canadian Idol*. He keeps his songwriting real and enjoys writing about his own experiences with songs that come from the heart.

On October 20, Centre City Media covered a documentary of Newfoundland's own Justin Fancy: *It's Been A... Long Time Comin'*. This documentary featured his candid story and covers the release of his debut album: *Sure Beats A Good Time*.

I encourage everyone to visit Justin Fancy's Facebook page or visit his website justinfancymusic.ca to follow his successful journey.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating and wishing Justin Fancy continued success in his music career.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday Nathan Sullivan and his dad, Ron, were in the woods cutting some birch for the winter. As Nathan started in with his chainsaw it suddenly kicked back and sliced into his dad's leg. The pain was intense and the bleeding was profuse, but Nathan's 10 years of training with the Grand Falls-Windsor Fire Department instinctively kicked in.

He encouraged his dad to remain calm and slow his breathing. With no cell service, he managed to get his dad on the quad and drove toward the highway until he had cell service. He then called his dispatch and gave the location where they would meet them on the highway.

For the rest of the drive on the quad, Nathan got his dad to sing a song to let him know that he's still with him. When Ron sang "Jingle Bells," Nathan, who hates Christmas songs too early, jokingly told him: If you keep that up, Skipper, you're not going to make it.

Ron is being discharged today with a new pair of chainsaw pants bought on Friday. He wants me to remind everybody to stay safe. It is paramount when cutting wood in the woods.

We wish him all the best, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to announce today the members of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team.

In the face of the ongoing global pandemic, the team will review the government's expenditures, the province's fiscal capacity and how services are delivered.

Mr. Speaker, they will also explore growth sectors, such as clean energy and investments in technology. Their suggestions will help inform our government's plan to ensure a financially stable province with a prosperous, bright future.

Led by Dame Moya Greene, who is globally recognized for her change-management skills, the team is made up of experienced leaders locally, nationally and internationally. These exceptional individuals have generously offered their time and expertise to help guide Newfoundland and Labrador towards a sustainable future.

An interim report to the provincial government will be provided by February 28, 2021, with a final report by April 30, 2021.

Newfoundland and Labrador has produced incredibly accomplished leaders in business, community and social sectors. We will leverage their passion for Newfoundland and Labrador and professional experiences to inform our government's plan to address our province's serious fiscal and financial situation.

I thank the members of the team for their contribution and I'm looking forward to their input on our plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Premier and to the experienced members of the team, the

last thing this province needs now is another review. What the province needs now is jobs. What the province needs now is action. We have the McKinsey report. We've had the Mills's report.

Again, I repeat, what we need now is jobs. There is an expression that says the secret to getting ahead is getting started. I would suggest that the Premier get started, creating jobs today instead of waiting for another report.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Premier for his first Ministerial Statement. It's good to see from the press release that PERT will address the \$6.3 billion the Liberal government has added to net debt over the last six years. I'm concerned there's no representation of municipalities, vulnerable sector groups, food security advocates or a role for elected MHAs on the task force.

I look forward to seeing government finally heeding the warnings and recommendations made by the Auditor General over the last 13 years and the million-dollar McKinsey diversification report we received last year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is my privilege to recognize in this hon. House the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's support dog, Stella.

I am sure many of you have seen Stella, the Portuguese water dog around the community

since she was first introduced in July. While she is still in training, soon Stella will begin working across various areas of the Justice system.

Stella is learning skills to detect and support persons in need. She will work with victims and survivors of violence and those struggling with mental illness, provide reassurance to calm witnesses testifying during court procedures and to help those who simply require some comfort during difficult times – including her own fellow RNC officers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Stella's handler, Constable Krista Fagan and her trainer, retired RNC Staff Sergeant Mike Adams, for their work in preparing Stella for this important role. You may have noticed through Stella's social media account, that she has been visiting organizations and workplaces across the province including Labrador and most recently Corner Brook. I had the opportunity yesterday to meet Stella and she is a welcomed addition to the Justice team.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those who made this program possible and I ask all hon. Members to join me in welcoming Stella to the RNC and Justice family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, while I recognize the benefits a support animal can provide to victims of crime and survivors of violence, I wish to speak today about the safety of our communities and the RNC within it.

Speeding on our roads and highways is a problem, there are many illicit drugs in our communities and violent crimes are far too common. Just yesterday, we heard about the frightening incident on Spencer Street in St. John's. I believe that our police force, under the minister's leadership, should be focused on the prevention of crime and on making our province a safer place to live.

Mr. Speaker, I've also heard far too many reports of police cars that need to be replaced, police computer systems which no longer work and equipment which needs to be upgraded. This is an area where the minister's attention should be focused.

So while I appreciate the value of Stella, I recommend to the minister that he give priority to helping our diligent police force ensure the safety of themselves and the general public at large.

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

We here in the NDP caucus had the privilege of Stella and her wonderful handler paying us a visit, but I also had the extra privilege of having them come visit my District of Labrador West for training.

The initiative by the RNC and its members is absolutely a great way forward in community policing and I encourage the RNC and the government to take a more in-depth look on how we can build on this kind of community policing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

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

Mr. Speaker, we can all be proud and assured that government, industry, labour and safety organizations in this province work together to build a strong safety culture.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians understand the significant physical, emotional and financial impacts of workplace injuries, illnesses and, tragically, even deaths. These impacts can be far-reaching, affecting workers, their co-workers, employers, families and whole communities.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, WorkplaceNL holds firm to its mandate to promote safe and healthy workplaces and to prevent workplace injuries. By working collaboratively with its partners, WorkplaceNL has produced incredibly effective educational materials and resources.

All of us in this hon. House recognize their achievements in promoting workplace health and safety and now, I am very proud to say, WorkplaceNL is gaining worldwide recognition and accolades.

Two of WorkplaceNL's creative initiatives have been named to the top 50 shortlist at the prestigious International Media Festival for Prevention 2021, part of the World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. These two initiatives were shortlisted from nearly 290 entries from 40 countries, an incredible success.

Mr. Speaker, the interactive online Young Worker Safety Course was developed in collaboration with the Department of Education and Bluedrop Performance Learning of St. John's and is available to high school students throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Since its launch in 2018, the self-directed course has inspired more than 1,600 youth to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to take a proactive approach to workplace health and safety practices.

WorkplaceNL also worked in partnership with all Atlantic Canadian workers' compensation organizations to develop the workplace injuries hurt the most at home. The campaign serves as an important reminder of workplace health and safety by showing the painful reality of families dealing with the aftermath of workplace injuries and deaths. It motivates everyone to make safety at work a priority.

Mr. Speaker, this international recognition is proof positive that WorkplaceNL and its partners are doing excellent work in promoting a

culture of safety in workplaces throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DINN: I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

As stated, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians certainly understand the significant physical, emotional and financial impacts of workplace injuries, illnesses and death. I truly congratulate WorkplaceNL on the production of some incredible educational material: the online Young Worker Safety Course and the workplace injuries hurt the most at home.

I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to applaud the tremendous work and dedication of our first responders and all essential workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DINN: Their jobs at times, and some more than others, involve great mental stress, which is often taken home at the end of each day.

We have made some strides but we need to continue to prevent, recognize and assist workers who have been impacted by on-the-job mental stress and illness. Broken bones and other bodily injuries are easy to diagnose and provide compensation, but we still have a ways to go when it comes to job-related mental illness.

Again, I congratulate WorkplaceNL. Let's continue to move forward to create safe work environments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for a copy of his statement and join him in congratulating WorkplaceNL for the recognition of its creative initiatives at the International Media Festival for Prevention 2021. It's certainly a remarkable accomplishment; however, the real measure of success is in the prevention of injuries.

According to the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour, 14 Newfoundland and Labrador workers are injured every day or get sick as a result of their jobs and 26 workers die annually as a result of their jobs. The number has not decreased.

We need more effective prevention and enforcement measures that will protect workers and decrease these alarming statistics. Worker safety must be paramount, especially during COVID-19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, does the Premier have a plan for jobs and prosperity or does he just plan to have a plan? People are struggling and desperate for answers.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to thank the Member opposite for my first question in this House of Assembly.

Thank you, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER FUREY: I think each and every one of us sit in these seats in this Legislature because we are interested in jobs, not for statistics but for the families and the sustainable future that it creates for the province. We're all working

collectively to develop strategies to create jobs, not just for tomorrow but for the future.

While the Member opposite may be interested in a quick slogan, we're interested in strategies towards a sustainable future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the people that I talk to want answers, not platitudes. The Premier says that big, bold ideas should inspire our relationship with Ottawa.

How many big, bold ideas has Trudeau agreed to so far?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Right now, in this time of disruption, I believe it is appropriate to consult with expertise towards developing sustainable, big, bold ideas. In a weird way, we've been afforded a different opportunity in this time of disruption to reimagine who we want to be as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and, indeed, our contribution to Canada. That's why it's important to have that strong relationship with the federal government.

To date, we've already secured the \$320 million towards oil and gas assistance. We've actually worked with them towards securing the \$26 million towards Safe Return to School and, Mr. Speaker, that's just the first two months. I'm just getting started.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier says he's just getting started; getting started in a timorous and cautious way is not a good omen.

In the past two weeks, we've seen 700 jobs potentially vanish in one district in our province alone.

How many more jobs does the Premier expect to lose during the first 100 days of his watch?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Jobs, once again, are incredibly important to each and every one of us in this House of Assembly. I have true compassion and empathy for those families and family members who are struggling through tough times. That's why we're here. That's why we're discussing topics that will advance their futures.

To say that now is not the time to consult, I beg to differ, Sir. Now is the exact time to consult so we can make the right decisions for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I'm hearing more platitudes, Mr. Speaker.

I've committed to implementing community benefits agreements.

I'm asking the Premier: Will he commit to the same, starting with the new mental health facility and all future infrastructure projects, to ensure that 100 per cent of jobs go to skilled Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

This is, indeed, an important question and an issue. I'm delighted to work directly with Trades NL on positive strategies to ensure that, not only do we receive maximum benefit for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and our economy, but we also create a regime which is respected and understood throughout the entire country. We can, indeed, make a positive impact on our construction projects to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are well engaged.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, in my own conversations with Mr. Darin King and members of the trades councils, the unions, they do, indeed, reflect and appreciate the fact that on the projects which have already been engaged in, significant Newfoundland and Labrador employment. In fact, in Corner Brook alone, in my hometown, 90 per cent are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at our hospital.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, those listening can draw their own conclusion. There was no commitment to what I asked about, which is community and jobs.

In my first meeting with the Premier in August, I told him that the All-Party pandemic Committee was valuable to public health. Why did he dissolve it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee wasn't dissolved. I didn't dissolve the Committee, and the Member opposite knows as much. In fact, it was the Member opposite who suggested that the Committee was deteriorating in terms of its effectiveness.

I think this Committee is an important Committee. We've reached the stage of almost

equilibrium with COVID-19 in our province right now. After any disaster, you go through ebbs and flows of where there's engagement and expertise and advice being provided. I think that Committee can be reinvigorated, if necessary, given the dynamic situation of COVID-19, and I'm confident and happy to work with the Members opposite towards such.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier stated there will be no fall election.

I ask the Premier: Does he still stand by this promise?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said publicly and will continue to state, I intend to follow the letter of the law with respect to the legislation and election timing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER FUREY: As the Members opposite know, it was their government that brought in that legislation and I'm going to follow that legislation to the letter of the law. I'm not going to use the law for politics. I'm going to follow the law.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, this past summer the Premier put out this statement: I fully support the private Member's resolution that was debated in the House of Assembly this afternoon. "There is no appetite in our province for an election this fall, as we continue to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. I've always respected this and will not call a snap election this fall."

I ask the Premier: Does he still stand by those words?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

As Deputy Premier, I'm happy to answer this question.

The only people talking about an election are the Members opposite and they are constantly, constantly talking about an election. In fact, several of them already have their cars wrapped.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: We're following the letter of the law, Mr. Speaker, a law that has been on the books of Newfoundland and Labrador for decades, and I certainly do appreciate that the people of the province understand that we must, as government, follow the law.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, that just indicates to me that they're dragging along the people of Newfoundland and Labrador while we are in the midst of a crisis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: It's not acceptable.

Every recent COVID case the province has seen has been travel related.

Will the Premier implement point-of-entry testing at our borders to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

The issue of appropriate use of testing – and the newer technology is very much active with the Health ministers – we take our guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The best screening test for COVID-19 is isolation. There

is no clear path from our scientific advisors to use point-of-entry testing in the way that has been described with the technology we have at the moment. Should that change, we will happily revisit our policies, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've known for the last seven months that the minister had no desire to do point-of-entry testing.

Mr. Speaker, with the rapid test kits that are now available, don't you think that we should have, and the Premier should implement immediately, border testing so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can travel back to Newfoundland and Labrador in a safe manner?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, in the Committee that the Opposition Members cease to attend, we discussed at great length the use of the testing equipment that we currently have. The role of the new rapid test kits is simply to produce a more speedy result of the existing version that is currently done at the public health laboratories here and in other jurisdictions. It does not predict who will have COVID in 10 days time.

Until we have some science to guide us, we have managed to keep our numbers the envy of Canada and the envy of the world. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Federal Minister Seamus O'Regan has turned his back on our province, has slammed the door

and taken an equity investment in West White Rose.

Premier, have you raised this issue directly with the prime minister?

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

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

I'm happy to take this important question.

Certainly, we've had conversations with the federal government regarding the issues that we face in our offshore, as it is dual jurisdiction, we'll say. We've talked to them regularly, as well as we've talked to the operators. The same thing that we've been doing today.

We're very happy to have \$320 million that's going to go towards starting jobs back up in this industry. I can tell you that the work is ongoing. There are proposals being received. The task force is working around the clock. My goal now is to work with them and support them in order to get these people back to work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Premier: Will you stand by the promise made to the people of the province that they will pay no more than 13.5 cents for power rates?

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

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

I can tell you that in my limited time in this role, one of the biggest issues that we've had to deal with is the impact of Muskrat Falls on this province and rate mitigation, which is something that affects every one of our constituents. We'll do everything we can to ensure that rate shock does not affect the people of this province.

The one thing I find disturbing is that they're asking about power rates when just yesterday the Leader of the PCs said that Muskrat Falls was a sound project. So, again, it leaves me wondering what is guiding them.

What I can say is that we're doing our best to deal with what is Muskrat Falls.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I really wish they'd live in the present and not the past, because they should – this everyday thing. The public has listened to this for six years now –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: – about Muskrat Falls. It's time to get on with life, Mr. Speaker.

Given the governments past secret business deals with their Liberal friends: Will the Premier now disclose who owns 80521 Newfoundland & Labrador Limited in the Canopy Growth deal?

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

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

I certainly understand why the Members opposite don't like talking about Muskrat Falls. I wouldn't want to be talking about it if I were them either, the ones that drove this process through without any due consideration. The fact is that it's not just the past, it is the present.

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis, you voted for this and sanctioned for this, so listen to my answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, it is not a past issue, it's a present issue. The deal is not even done. It is not even constructed completely yet, but right now we are still dealing with the fallout. This government will continue to commit to trying to right this project.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, our province is not being treated fairly by their friends in Ottawa. We are hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions a year short of getting our fair share in transfer payments.

I ask the Premier: Will he be tougher than his predecessor was with Ottawa and demand that we are treated equal and get the same fiscal support that other provinces are getting?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will remind the Member opposite, it was actually during the former administration where Newfoundland and Labrador no longer received equalization; in fact, they didn't even show up for the discussions around the changes to the equalization program. I can tell the Member opposite that every single week we are talking to Ottawa about fiscal stabilization, every single week we're speaking to them about equalization.

As the Member opposite should know, if he does not know, the equalization formula is not up for review for a couple of years, but I can tell you that we are continuously and continuing to press for fiscal stabilization in this country.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'd remind the current Minister of Finance that the former provincial minister of Finance said those words, not me. In April of this year he said: "We're not asking for a bailout. We're asking to be treated the same as other provinces." He went on to say: "We're not asking for any more. We're asking to be treated equal."

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said that government needs to be rightsized and attrition is not enough.

I ask the Premier: Will there be layoffs in the public service?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I will say to the Member opposite that I would stand by what the former minister of Finance said. We do ask to be treated equally in this country; we do ask to receive what I consider the fair fiscal stabilization process, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite keeps fear mongering around layoffs. We had a plan that was pre-COVID that was moving towards a balanced budget. As the Member opposite knows, we're in the midst of a global pandemic. We have a budget before this House that does not contain any layoffs or any move towards that.

I ask him to vote in favour of this current budget, Mr. Speaker, and help this province get back on its feet from this global pandemic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I have to say again these are not my words; these are the words of the Premier: Government needs to be rightsized. Attrition is not enough. I'm not asking for layoffs but I'd sure like to understand what his opinion on that is.

The terms of reference which were released today for the Moya Greene task force says it will review expenditures across government. Does her terms of reference include layoffs for the public service?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to again – and I'll say it slowly so that everyone can hear and understand what we've been saying about reimagining government. We have a very stellar group of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians coming together to look at how we can deliver public services differently, how we can improve the way we're offering services in this province, how we can address the structural, long-standing – I can hear the Members opposite chirping right now.

I know it's a sensitive topic to them because in the heyday of oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, when there were billions of dollars in excess revenue in this province, they were still overspending.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, stall, stall, stall.

Listen, there's an old expression: The only people waiting for next year are people whose teams have been eliminated from the playoffs.

I ask the minister once again: Are there going to layoffs according to Moya Greene?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I will say again that we are looking at how we structurally improve this province. I ask the Member opposite to join us, to join Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in addressing the long-standing financial and fiscal challenges this province has had.

I will say to the Member opposite: I think that there's a rallying cry in this province to do things better and that is what we are working on, especially since we are just in the middle of a global pandemic that is addressing, that is challenging some of our fiscal and economic realities in this province.

I ask him, I ask all of his colleagues in this House of Assembly to join us in improving Newfoundland and Labrador and coming out of this pandemic in a stronger position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope to God the public service doesn't see the layoffs like the oil and gas has seen underneath this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, rotational workers are waiting almost two weeks for news of relaxation of testing rules.

If the Premier is still with us: When will these long-suffering heroes, many of whom have been separated from their family, friends and their homes since this pandemic began, get a decision on this?

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

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

The situation with regard to rotational workers and their requirements has been eased at least twice during COVID. They are in a fortunate position compared with other workers returning to this province. I think that needs to be laid out there upfront. The final analysis of the data is nearly ready and the issue of whether or not those recommendations can be changed will be based solely on that.

I would, however, draw to everyone's attention that our cases over the last four weeks have all

been related to work-related travel. That is going to weigh into the decision.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, after 17 years in the oil industry people are waiting to hear these answers.

The Premier told the jobs rally, right here in front of Confederation Building, that there is no future for us without a strong oil and gas industry. After a lifetime in oil and gas, I agree.

On behalf of all those who work in the offshore and spinoff jobs, I ask the Premier: Does he think his friend Trudeau has done enough to ensure our oil and gas industry will survive at this point?

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

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

I certainly appreciate the Member's passion and the fact that he's spent a lifetime in this industry. So surely he would know that the situation we face is not just a Newfoundland and Labrador one, it's one that's global in nature affecting every jurisdiction that is dealing in oil and gas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, I'm trying to answer, but they clearly don't want an answer.

What I would say to the Member, though, is that during this process I've heard solutions presented from the Member for Terra Nova, I've had other workers present me with ideas that they want to have. What I would say to the Member opposite, as someone who's worked in this industry, I would be more than happy to hear what your solutions and suggestions are for the situation that we all face.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Minister of Fisheries recently signed off –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: The Minister of Fisheries recently signed off on a deal to see Quinlan Brothers purchased by Royal Greenland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: This deal will make a foreign company owned by a government in Greenland –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, can I ask my question?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

I'd like to hear the Member's question.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: The Minister of Fisheries recently signed off on a deal to see Quinlan Brothers purchased by Royal Greenland. This deal will make a foreign company owned by the Government of Greenland the largest fish processor in this province. A foreign company will control quotas, harvesting licence and land millions of pounds of shellfish and other species around our province.

Premier, please, Premier, answer this question: Do you support the level of foreign investment in Newfoundland and Labrador fishery?

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

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell the hon. Member why I'm answering this question. It's because I have confidence in the Premier and he has confidence in this minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LOVELESS: I'll tell the hon. Member in terms of Royal Greenland, that transfer that happened, there was a process that took place for five months by the fisheries licensing board and that Member over there did not show any objections during that process, so you didn't do your job, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

This deal is being considered a giveaway of our natural resources. Royal Greenland received hundreds of millions of dollars in investments from the Government of Greenland. This company is in direct competition with our province.

Premier: Did you believe that Royal Greenland will make the best decisions of the interests of the people of the province and the economy of Newfoundland given the shareholders are the people of Greenland, and let the minister know that over the last two years Royal Greenland has been reported to the bureau for competition in Canada on failure to do fair business associates?

Did you do your fair diligence on this report only two weeks into your portfolio? I don't think so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we really need to put this where it should be. There was a due diligence process, and that was a five-month process that was agreed upon back in 2005 by the Dunne report, where it should be, for a fish processing licensing board.

Again, I challenge the Member; you're here today presenting objectives to it. Why didn't you object during the due diligence process which was a five-month process? You didn't, I say to the hon. Member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: The previous minister took four months; you took two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government recently provided \$80,000 to the International Fund for Animal Welfare to remove plastics from harbours in our province. The IFAW has a history of spreading falsehoods, propaganda about our seal fishery, attacking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as barbarians.

Will the Premier commit to defending Newfoundland and Labrador by calling upon the federal cousins to ban anti-sealing groups from projects in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

MR. LOVELESS: I thank the hon. Member for the question because it is a good question. I do agree with what he said about IFAW. When I found out about it, I wrote to the federal minister asking her to reverse that decision. I've been discussing that with the federal MPs as well, and they've been displeased about it. We're working

on it. My understanding now is that someone locally in this province may be doing that work. Even though IFAW is attached to it, we don't agree with that and we've made that very clear to the federal minister.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I trust the Premier is enjoying his first day on the job.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What will happen to the work of the task forces if he was to call an election before their mandates are complete?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question.

Again, the only one talking about an election is on the opposite side of the House.

I would like to see the task force continue, irrespective of an election call, because I think they are apolitical in nature. I think that they are going to provide some sound apolitical advice in terms of the fiscal situation, in terms of economic development and in terms of a sustainable future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to the Premier upholding his commitment to not hold a fall election.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: What is he planning on doing to address the systematic problems in our economy and neighbourhoods

as exemplified by the ongoing violence in parts of downtown St. John's?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I saw and was troubled by those images as well. I think that there's no one in this House that wants to see people in vulnerable situations, in vulnerable environments be subject to some of those pictures that were released online. It was truly disheartening.

I think that we can work with the local municipalities and local property owners to ensure that we're doing our best as government to ensure that we're protecting the most vulnerable in society, which is one of the reasons I'm here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to action there.

Mr. Speaker, budgets are about choices. Last year, the Liberal government chose to give \$337,000 to Mr. Gordon McIntosh; meanwhile, this government was not able to ensure the entire \$210,000 allocated for mother and baby nutritional supplements in this province for families making less than \$26,000 per year.

I ask the Premier: Where do his priorities lie? Consultants with Liberal ties or the mouths of babies?

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

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

I'm happy to answer this question, and it's ironic that I answer a question about babies when I'm sitting right next to the first one in this very House of Assembly.

I don't think there's any doubt as to our priorities because it's this budget that committed

to \$25-a-day child care here in this province. It's funny; I've been hearing from the Opposition about going to the past, the Member opposite is speaking to last year's budget. What I want to know is as we move forward with this year's budget, I look forward to seeing how the Member votes and whether she'll support this government and our priorities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the Estimates process, I suggested that perhaps we could raise the threshold beyond \$26,000 for a household and afford individuals more than \$60 per month for a nutritional supplement for pregnant mothers.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said that everything is on the table.

I ask the Premier: Are the following cuts on the table: seniors' medication and dental care; public services in rural Newfoundland and Labrador; mental health services, especially for our most vulnerable; safe, affordable housing; equitable employment benefits such as paid sick days; long-term care staffing in rural Newfoundland; taxes to corporations; environmental protection agencies?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say this, that we have a budget before this House where none of those things are in that budget. None of those cuts are in that budget, Mr. Speaker. I ask the Member opposite to vote in favour of our budget because it's a very important budget for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm concerned that she is fear mongering and talking about things that are not contained in the budget.

We have a reasonable, responsible plan. We have a reasonable, responsible budget. I encourage everyone in this House to support it

so that we can support the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will he legislate a living wage for the people of this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour for a quick answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: While I attempt to talk about a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker, which is the ability for people in this province to be able to earn a living and to make a wage that reflects their needs, I do reflect on the fact that we've had as a labour standard a minimum wage which was arrived at through consultations. Representatives from labour, representatives from the employer community, as well as an independent chair, provided direction to this government, as was required under legislation that was produced some years earlier, that we arrive at a formula to provide recommendations for a minimum wage.

What I would like to point out is that ongoing discussions occur each and every day with groups that have a very, very strong interest and provide this government with strong, strong input. I enjoy listening and working with those groups every day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Before I move to Presenting Reports, I just want to remind the Members that during Question Period I want questions and answers to be

directed through the Speaker. That's part of keeping the temperature a little bit lower. I noticed several times during Question Period today, Members on both sides of the House addressed the Members across the Chamber. So I remind Members that they should direct their comments to the Chair.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: I have two documents to table.

In accordance with section 19, subsection (5), paragraph (a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings held on July 30, 2020; September 9, 2020; September 29, 2020.

Also, pursuant to section 9(1) of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I am pleased to table the *2019-20 Annual Performance Report* of the Office of the Citizens' Representative.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, Co-operatives Act And The Corporations Act, Bill 51.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act, Bill 49.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act, Bill 50.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice under section 11(1) of the *Standing Orders* that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, the 26th of October.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice under section 11(1) of the *Standing Orders* that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Grand Falls-Windsor and surrounding municipalities of the Central region do not agree with the recent decision to redirect non-urgent laboratory samples from the Central Newfoundland

Regional Health Centre to the James Paton Memorial Regional Health Centre, due to the potential negative impacts of our facility, its employees and the patients of CNRHC.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to keep the laboratory services in Grand Falls-Windsor, therefore limiting the fallout that would occur if this decision were to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I've received over 4,000 names on petitions that went through the Central district. I want to thank all those who put their names on the petition as well as Councillor Holly Dwyer who has worked adamantly on this file as well.

The people of my district and surrounding municipalities find the answers that have come so far disingenuous. They have a problem with it. Whenever you move a service or disrupt a service, it has to have some sort of implication or changes.

I'm not going to take long with this, Mr. Speaker, but I'll just say this, could the minister table the report or any documentation or any evidence about changes to lab services from Grand Falls-Windsor to the other district that would save money or be better for the province? Any evidence whatsoever would be great. A report that is out there somewhere, apparently; if he could table that, that would be great because nobody is just going to come into my backyard and take services and effect jobs and services as well. I look forward to the report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I think it's important to lay out a couple of things. One is that lab services in the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre will continue. There will be no change to the level of service to patients or clinicians.

What will happen, in the smaller communities, places such as Hugh Twomey and Baie Verte and those kind of category B as we call them, emergency departments, is they're actually going to get better lab services out of hours, with instant, pretty well, bedside testing on a wider range of tests that are currently available. They will also not notice any alteration in their level of service except perhaps an improvement in the speed in which the results go back.

This is the aim of lab reform, Mr. Speaker, it's about doing things wiser with the dollars. It's about doing things better for the patients of Central Newfoundland. I would encourage the Member to spread a little more accurate information with his public postings.

Thank you very much.

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

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

WHEREAS in the District of Harbour Main there are many seniors who are concerned that there's no government-assisted dental plan for them.

Seniors are struggling each month and barely covering their day-to-day living expenses. In addition to these daily financial worries, there are a large number of seniors who have to live with the pain and agony that goes with lack of dental treatment. The increased stress and anxiety on these individuals and their families, due to the lack of an affordable dental program, is discouraging and it's unacceptable.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary action to implement an affordable dental program for our seniors, our most vulnerable citizens, so that they no longer need to endure the pain and suffering from the lack of required dental work.

Mr. Speaker, there are people in both urban and rural Newfoundland and Labrador who are doing without publicly accessible and affordable dental care, specifically, our seniors. For

example, just in the last few weeks, I have been in touch and contacted by seniors. One, for example, is a 70-year-old man. He requires to have 10 extractions.

He's a low-income senior. He's worked his entire life and is now only living on less than \$20,000 each year. He's trying to pay bills; he's trying to buy groceries. That's next to impossible without the added expense of dental work. His family have been watching as their father has been going through this pain. He's been almost continuously on antibiotics for the infection for years.

Another senior requires 19 extractions. He told me that he's on a limited income of just around \$1,000 per month and he's managed to get the money together by getting a loan of \$2,750 and having the procedure completed.

Mr. Speaker, these are just two examples. My colleagues in the Opposition here have raised these issues in other petitions as well.

I anticipate what the minister is going to say. He will say that while we have to solve our fiscal problems – in fact, this is what he said in response to one of my colleagues raising this petition – we have to spend within the limits of our budget.

I counter that by saying, if we look at, for example, the Ontario government, they have implemented a new program which addresses low-income adults and seniors, but studies, including one by the Ontario government, have shown that having no public dental care has cost the government and the health care system millions and millions of dollars in the long term.

Instead of going for regular dental checkups and treatment, people end up in our doctor's offices and our emergency rooms and even hospital admissions due to severe dental oral health issues, pain and infections. We all know as well, and the minister is surely well aware, of how serious dental oral health issues can and do affect seniors' overall health – physically, emotionally and mentally.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the government believes that they save money in the short term by eliminating the adult basic dental program and

the program that was implemented by the Conservatives, by the PCs, but it will cost them much, much more in the long term by having no public dental program or one that is failing so many of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the minister recognize that this policy is needed. We need a more improved dental program; seniors require a dental program to maintain their overall physical health and mental health.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I heard the Member's impassioned plea and it's not received unsympathetically; however, I think, again, some of the information presented there has been selective.

We do have a dental plan, Mr. Speaker; we have a low-income support plan. Whilst not the most lavish in Canada, it's nowhere near the bottom of the pile. Is there room for improvement? Yes, Mr. Speaker, there doubtless is. We also have, for those individuals for whom she is specifically advocating, a variety of mechanisms to have their dental situation looked at by dentists and there's an appeal committee, the dental management committee.

I would encourage the Member, if she has specific cases, to supply the appropriate details to the department if this has not otherwise been resolved, but I would argue that some of her comments are selective and they've left out the fact we do actually have a dental plan, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

MR. CROCKER: Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 13, seconded by the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

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

MR. CROCKER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, just quickly. This is just a housekeeping matter, actually, to make some corrections to the Order Paper so that we're set to go for next week.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the Budget Speech, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. CROSBIE: I'd ask the other side to save their applause until the end.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Each year, regardless of which party holds government, a budget is prepared and tabled in this hon. House of Assembly. It is the government of the day's spending blueprint and often comes with policy statements to guide government's action for the fiscal year. The annual budget brings with it a Budget Speech, the Estimates book, a report on the provincial economy and other shorter documents such as highlights and news releases. These all work together to paint a picture of the province's financial and economic health.

Before I get into the details of *Budget 2020*, on the occasion of his first day in this House, I'd like to take a moment to welcome the new Premier, the Member for Humber - Gros Morne, into the hon. Chamber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Being a Member of the House of Assembly comes with great honour but also great duty. As MHAs, we all must put the interests of citizens first and seek to find balance between competing priorities. Some Members of this House have represented their constituents for many years, over multiple terms, and the secret of their success is to always listen to the people of your district, seek to provide assistance to the people of your district and, to the best of your ability, represent the interests of your district. After all, it is the constituents who are our bosses.

As leaders of provincial parties, the Premier, the Leader of the NDP, and I have added responsibilities. Not only do we have districts to represent, but we are also responsible to act in the best interest of the entire province. We must be advocates for each and every person in the province, standing up for their jobs, their well-being and their communities.

I should not have to remind the Premier of his responsibilities. It is now his name on the door to the Premier's Office. He is now accountable to the people of this province, and it is his responsibility to ensure that the people of the province have a better quality of life and are

more prosperous in the future than they are today.

This will take action. Swift, decisive and informed decisions are needed. The people of this province do not need more delays through the formation of drawn-out task forces on urgent matters that require urgent action. So I urge the Premier to change course and be a take-action Premier, not the task force Premier he is at risk of becoming.

I also remind the Premier that I will be here every day holding him to account and advocating for every resident of the province. I will continue to speak up for job creation; I will continue to speak up for workers in our offshore industry, workers at Come By Chance, small business owners, parents, teachers, students, health care workers, municipal leadership. No matter their profession, age, gender or socio-economic status, I am here to stand up for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I will not stop advocating for the people of this province. Not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: With that being said, I welcome the Premier into this House and I look forward to engaging him in rigorous debate.

Back to the budget, Mr. Speaker. Before I talk about what is or is not contained in the budget, I'd like to talk about the budget process, budget preparation and post-budget activities.

On budget day we were given a number of documents, as I previously mentioned. I won't recap each document, but I will draw reference to the immense amount of work that goes into creating a budget and the accompanying documentation. So much work goes into a provincial budget that officials within the Department of Finance have already started preparing next year's budget as we speak.

To the Finance officials: Thank you. Thank you for cross-checking all the numbers, thank you for your authorship of the budget Estimates and Economy book, and thank you for your efforts in the budget process.

I'm not going to credit them with the authorship of the title of the document. I assume an outside consultant was paid for that one.

I'd also like to thank the officials from all the departments who sat before us during the Estimates Committee meetings. Yesterday morning in this House, we finished the examination of Estimates, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank those officials who did their very best to give full, accurate and clear answers. I know my colleagues in Opposition asked a lot of questions.

I'd also like to thank the Table Officers, Broadcast staff, Committee Members and all others who sat here meeting after meeting to make sure the Estimates process was carried out.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to send out a special thank you to the staff in our political office. While we have debated the Estimates, they've worked tirelessly behind the scenes to prepare us, guide us and take notes. I think all Members of this House can agree that we couldn't do our jobs as MHAs without our staff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize my own caucus. They sit here with me every day, provide guidance and stand up for the residents of their districts. I know each Member of my caucus has spoken passionately to this budget – passionately – representing their constituents and I could not be prouder of them. To my team: Thank you for fighting for the jobs of your constituents, the businesses in your districts and for services like busing, roads and health care.

My team, the Progressive Conservative team, has spoken at length about this budget, but it is my job today to bring a conclusion to our remarks, summarize them and put on the record how we collectively feel about the Liberal government's fiscal and economic plan.

The new Premier said that this is a budget about emerging from an economic crisis together, yet he did not explain how we would emerge from the economic crisis or how we will do it together, when, according to the budget, 13,000 people are being thrown out of their jobs this

year. As I've said previously, and I'll say it again, that 13,000 is the most important number in this budget. That's 13,000 job losses; 13,000 people who will struggle to buy Christmas presents; 13,000 families who have to make tough decisions; and 13,000 people who are ready to work and grow our province.

These 13,000 people need this Liberal government to stand up, take decisive action and focus on jobs. I'm focused on the workers who are waiting for their phone to ring and waiting to get back to work. Premier, if you're listening, I urge you to help them get back to work.

The public knows that our fiscal situation is dire. I will not add to the pile of gloomy statistics already so ably analyzed by my Finance critic colleague, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and by other Members of the PC caucus. The public also knows that if job creation does not become a priority for the Liberals, the statistics will only get worse.

When I told the media on budget day that 13,000 job losses was the most important number in the budget, as I've repeated here today, the province did not know that in just a matter of weeks the job loss total would escalate, even beyond the gloomy prediction contained in the budget. Since the budget was brought down on September 30, there have been layoffs at Husky, Suncor's Terra Nova, Come By Chance Refinery, Trans-Ocean, various airlines, numerous engineering firms and small businesses.

Yesterday, we also heard about delays in the aquaculture industry. Jobs are vanishing from our province and the Liberals are not taking action. Without jobs our economy will continue to decline, tax revenue will decline and the fiscal situation of the province will be even worse.

Our provincial budget problem is not hard to explain. The province raises about \$7 billion and spends about \$9 billion. Obviously, we cannot sustain our province indefinitely running deficits, but neither can we sustain our province continually losing jobs.

If I were premier, my immediate action would be to get more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working. Then, when employment

and the economy rebound, I would take decisive action to lower the province's deficit and secure a bright and sustainable future for every resident of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Jobs are created through investment largely by the private sector, but investment will not come unless there is confidence and confidence must be grounded on something more than words of hope. Investor confidence will only be grounded on sound leadership and planning. In a time of economic crisis, it is imperative not just to tell people what you dream about achieving, but to tell people exactly how you plan to get from here to there. In a time of crisis, people look to their leaders for clear direction, and that is what *Budget 2020* is sadly lacking.

The words in *Budget 2020* are even more important than the numbers. A budget should ground hope and inspiration on a clear projection with measurable milestones of how people's lives will look in Newfoundland and Labrador in the next three, five or 10 years, and in what ways people's lives will be better. The Liberal government tells us that this is a pandemic budget and therefore a status quo budget.

Throughout this pandemic, throughout this economic storm, instead of taking the helm and guiding our province on a clearly charted course to calmer waters, the government opposite has essentially run this province on autopilot and with *Budget 2020*, the province continues to toss to and fro on stormy seas, on autopilot, without any clear sense of where the province is heading. That lack of clarity is what really makes investors nervous and we have seen one investor after another ratchet back their operations, waiting to find out what this government intends to do.

The Liberals have squandered an important opportunity to state in clear and unequivocal terms what course of action they intend to take. Instead, they opted to kick the can down the road. They have punted the decisions into the next budget. They tell us that in the next budget we will get a peek around the corner at their plans.

At this point, it's not even clear that they have a plan, even a secret plan. All we've been told is that there will be tough decisions, painful decisions in budget 2021. Tough decisions were the Premier's words, but we've also been told that the tough decisions will be set out, not by the Premier, who just took his seat, but someone else who will provide recommendations that will inform our path to a sustainable and diversified vibrant economy for future generations to inherit.

Dame Moya Greene has been appointed by the Premier to lead a task force on economic growth. When she was appointed, the Premier said she was appointed with a primary goal of presenting opportunities and ideas to the Premier as we look to a better and brighter economic future.

Mr. Speaker, the keywords there are "economic future." When I heard that, I was under the impression that Ms. Greene would be looking for ways to create jobs; however, on budget day, the Finance Minister said Ms. Greene would be reimagining government. Does reimagining government mean cutting programs and services and, with it, cutting jobs? Reimagining government does not sound like job creation.

In a province losing people, the last thing we need is to be turfing people from public service jobs at a time when the private sector is not healthy enough to create the jobs to employ them. When the private sector economy is thriving, people in the public service have opportunities to bring their skills to other employers and continue to live and contribute to the economy right here in our province where they're needed.

When our private sector economy is decimated by one shutdown after another, as we're seeing now, people displaced from the public sector would have few choices but to join the thousands who have picked up and moved away. How does that contribute to "a sustainable and diversified, vibrant economy for future generations to inherit"?

So people need to know – and they need to know now – what exactly Ms. Greene is being tasked to do and whether this reimagining of government will be done in tandem with

concerted efforts to get our private sector economy thriving as it once was.

I hope the Premier will promise that the people of the province will see all the recommendations of the Greene Economic Recovery team, as well as the budget 2021 choices the government makes in light of the Greene report, before the Premier asks Her Honour to trigger the next general election. Because people have a right to see the Moya Greene report, and know the Premier's budgetary decisions, and have them scrutinized and debated in the House before they go to the polls.

Although we have no idea what advice Ms. Greene will deliver, we know the government already has the million-dollar McKinsey report in hand, and that report identified golden opportunities for this province's economy to thrive on the strengths we already have. We know we have the resources. We have strategic advantages. We have skilled people ready to work. All the province is lacking right now is the decisive leadership to turn those strengths into real investment, real growth and real jobs.

Twenty months after the February 2019 McKinsey report was delivered, all we are seeing this government do is commission yet another process to study where the opportunities are and suggest what might be done to seize them. It's not reassuring to investors to see this Liberal government and their new Premier set up task forces to replicate the work that others have already done to identify opportunities we already ought to be seizing. Only a decisive plan of action will give people a solid reason to believe we are on course for "a sustainable and diversified, vibrant economy for future generations to inherit."

Because the Liberal government opposite has failed to put forward a decisive plan of action, it is my obligation, as Leader of the PC Opposition, to offer my own plan of action to give people confidence that Newfoundland and Labrador can indeed build a sustainable, diversified, vibrant economy for future generations to inherit.

Let me tell this House and all the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador how I would act and how I would ensure jobs were available for

the residents of this province. Jobs will be my first priority. This includes jobs in our offshore industry, jobs at the Come By Chance Refinery and jobs created by small- and medium-sized businesses.

Several months ago, I released my action plan for the offshore industry. The Natural Resources Minister recently asked the Official Opposition for just one example of something we would recommend that could help Newfoundland and Labrador escape the grip of the global downturn in the oil industry. While the government opposite is offering excuses, I'm offering solutions.

One of the solutions in my plan is to make a strong and persuasive and vocal case to the federal government for incentives to drive exploration and petroleum development. This is what Noia recommended many months ago, as they watched the summer exploration season dwindle away. This is the approach Norway has taken to secure a surprisingly large share of the limited exploration dollars that are circulating now around the globe. Norway is a green energy leader, an environmentally responsible jurisdiction that recognizes the need for balance to protect jobs and growth, and they have taken a course of action that our provincial government should have been able to persuade the Trudeau government to follow, but failed to do so.

The government opposite and the new Premier have meekly applauded the Trudeau government's failure to act. This is not leadership on behalf of the province. This is capitulation, at a time when leadership is what Newfoundland and Labrador requires.

My plan of action also includes working urgently with Suncor to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are working on the maintenance and refit of the Terra Nova FPSO. The Terra Nova FPSO will soon be on the way to Bull Arm where it will sit idle. Tradespeople who are capable of doing much of the work are sitting at home waiting for the call that never comes.

I would demand that our tradespeople be the ones hired to do the work on the Terra Nova FPSO. I would determine what Suncor requires

to start this refit and then find a way to make it happen, and I would work to ensure the FPSO gets back in service as soon as possible, producing oil and sustaining jobs.

I would not sit silently while the federal government is destroying our province's offshore industry through deliberate action. I would certainly not sit by and wait until the start of yet another year to make decisions on the offshore while time and opportunity and jobs are slipping away.

My plan of action for jobs and growth in our offshore also includes working with the federal government to put in place a petroleum incentive program, or PIP, to give cost-reduction incentives to companies based on the magnitude of their exploration drilling programs.

My plan of action includes making retroactive changes to allow the parcels of land awarded in the November 2019 land sale to fall under the previously announced changes regarding the allowable expenditure credit for drilling overhead costs and the accelerated write-down of security deposits."

My plan of action: "**Review the land sales tender process** to ensure a comprehensive approach to evaluation that includes economic as well as other benefits including but not limited to, social, local supply chain, diversity, inclusion, and environmental."

My plan of action includes "Advocating for the reinstatement of the **Atlantic Investment Tax Credit of 10-15%**. This would encourage the development of" the Bay du Nord Project and other offshore resources.

My plan of action includes "Ensuring the future fiscal certainty for any projects ... started in the next 5 years which are tied back to a production facility."

My plan of action includes "Investing the provincial portion of the CNLOPB budget for two fiscal years to **make funds available** within the oil industry to support exploration or production jobs within the province."

My plan of action includes "Lobbying the Federal Government to **permanently allow**

foreign tankers to operate within Canadian waters with the purpose to transport Newfoundland and Labrador oil to other provinces within Canada.”

My plan of action includes “**Reviewing and advocating for other liquidity measures**, such as, immediate deductibility of capital costs against taxable income in the year it is expensed which would allow the industry to free up liquid cash flow which should be used to support jobs within the province.”

These are concrete, tangible action items that can deliver jobs, but only if there is strong leadership at the helm to champion our case and not relent until results are delivered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: My plan of action also includes securing an investor for the West White Rose project. Rather than making excuses about the global oil downturn or the pandemic, I would be working diligently with Husky Energy to identify ways to ensure the project’s viability. That includes making a stronger and louder case before the federal government to offer a responsible equity investment and other incentives to get this project up and running and 1,000 people back to work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, a federal equity investment is what started this province’s oil industry, when the Mulroney government bought a stake in Hibernia. But that would not have happened without the strong and relentless advocacy of my father, who resolved at all times to put Newfoundland and Labrador’s best interests first, no matter what his opponents or even his colleagues said against it. That’s leadership, and it’s been sorely lacking in both levels of government today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: I would take inspiration from individuals like former Prime Minister Mulroney who helped launch our offshore when he agreed to support Hibernia, even when many said it should not be done.

The remarks Mr. Mulroney delivered on October 1, set out a vision of what could be accomplished when those in positions of leadership have the political will. He set out a vision of a future of jobs and prosperity based, not on wishful thinking, but on capitalizing on our known human and natural resources.

Mr. Mulroney’s vision is not one of task forces and delays; it is one of action and prosperity. It is one of jobs, where people are working creating a vibrant and rich future for all of us.

In this spirit, I share the recent following words of Mr. Mulroney with the House. “Overall, the offshore industry in Newfoundland can generate about \$60 billion in GDP by 2036 and I’m saying to you, can anybody in his right mind say no to an industry that’s going to do this for Newfoundland and Labrador? I say, absolutely not”

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, these are words of Mr. Mulroney. He goes on to say: “... and if I were Prime Minister I’d know what to do to ensure development.

“And let me tell you what I would do. I speak from the perspective as ... one of the fathers of the Newfoundland [and Labrador] offshore industry, but also as someone who in 2006 was voted by all of the environmental leaders in Canada as the greenest Prime Minister in Canadian history. So I’m speaking about both sides of this equation. Both of which are important and indeed vital.”

Mr. Mulroney continued: “The government of Canada would prioritize, if I were there, an advanced energy project that strikes a balance between enormous national and economic opportunity, and managing our global climate change commitments. This is not contradictory. It’s been done before.

“So, it’s been done before and I think and that I know in fact that Newfoundland [and Labrador]’s oil per barrel emits significantly less GHGs than any other crude and so I would look to incent investments that would bring on this advantage and lower the carbon footprint further.”

“Now, my officials who would represent the government of Canada would be under strong instructions to stay at the negotiating table of Newfoundland and Labrador and our industry partners to find solutions to development like [West] White Rose and others, much as we did with Hibernia. Walking away is at stake and not just for Newfoundland and Labrador but for all the companies involved. And so in this negotiation I would tell them as well, failure is not an option. I want a deal with Newfoundland and Labrador and by God if I have to go down there and do it myself, we’re gonna get” it done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Let me repeat that failure is not an option. Mr. Mulroney said it and I also say it. If I were premier, failure would not be an option. I would take action and champion the cause of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to get back to work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: I want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, now to talk about Come By Chance. While we’re all concerned about the future of the Come By Chance Refinery, there are MHAs in my caucus who spend the majority of their days taking calls from concerned workers.

The MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue and the MHA for Terra Nova represent the two districts which are impacted most by the devastating news of the refinery closure. These two fine Members have asked questions in this House and they’ll continue to demand action. I join with them. We will continue to fight for the workers of the Come By Chance Refinery and ensure that there are jobs at the refinery for years to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: The Come By Chance Refinery is important to the entire province. The refinery produces fuels such as propane and jet fuel, which are used in the province. They are producing fuel that NL Hydro turns into electricity, which we all use.

The workers at the refinery live in Arnold’s Cove, Clarenville and many other communities

in the surrounding area. These workers shop in the communities, eat in the establishments in the area and support the local economy. If the refinery closes permanently, the impacts will be felt throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology doesn’t like to talk about the what-ifs. He keeps saying the sale of the refinery is a commercial transaction. In lack of details from the minister, let me outline how I would have acted to secure the jobs at the refinery.

First, I would have ensured I was monitoring the sale very closely. I would have seen that there was trouble with the sale and would have checked with both parties to see what I could have done, as premier, to help smooth a successful transition.

Secondly, I would have continued talks with other potential buyers. I would have made sure that, if the original deal fell through, another company was ready to step in and take over the transaction at a moment’s notice. I would ensure that jobs at the Come By Chance Refinery exist for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I said moments ago that employment at Come By Chance supports small- and medium-sized businesses within the region. With that being said, I want to take a few moments to talk about small- and medium-sized businesses within the province.

While *Budget 2020* contains \$25 million to support small businesses within the province, this Liberal government is delaying in getting the funding out the door. The money cannot create jobs while it sits in the province’s bank account. This money must be swiftly given out to the business owners who can turn it into jobs for the people of the province. The Liberals haven’t even released which businesses are eligible to apply, what the money can be used for or how much a business can obtain.

Mr. Speaker, I feel for the business owners who are trying their hardest to resist the economic downturn. They are trying their hardest to rehire staff, increase their sales and grow our economy.

Ruwei Liang, a business owner in my district, comes to mind as a story of resilience. Ruwei

Liang and his family opened their restaurant in the middle of a pandemic. Now despite adversity, the family can't keep up with the business.

Ruwei says his new business in Airport Heights has been getting hundreds of calls a day for take-out orders. A small staff at KungFu restaurant keep food orders filled at the new spot, the only restaurant in the neighbourhood.

Ruwei has been working toward opening a Chinese restaurant in St. John's since 2018, and it finally came together right as the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading around the world – talk about adversity.

Liang has a small staff, a cook and two waitresses, along with him and his wife, and he has two restaurants just outside of Hong Kong. He came to Canada in 2013, and after travelling through different provinces, settled on Newfoundland and Labrador to continue his culinary dream.

Even succeeding business owners like Liang need government support. If Liang can create success without government support in the middle of a pandemic, imagine what he can do with the kind of support the government ought to be providing to drive small- and medium-sized business growth during these challenging times.

This is Small Business Week. Instead of going into rapid response mode to create jobs, the Liberal government is in do-nothing mode. They're not mobilizing their \$25 million fund, and red tape remains a nuisance to small- and medium-sized businesses. Red tape is a barrier to investment and job creation, and as the Mills's report found, it is an item for urgent action which this government has ignored.

A small business owner should not have to talk to multiple people in multiple departments to get a simple answer. Small business owners should be assisted and helped by government, not bogged down by paperwork and process. A government I lead will move swiftly to slice away the red tape that blocks business growth and jobs.

In 2020, all applications and forms should be able to be filled out online. We should be reducing red tape and letting business focus on their customers and their employees.

The need to be competitive in our tax system is also urgent, and to say that we are competitive with other Atlantic Canadian provinces is a recipe for mediocrity and failure, because the whole region is lagging the rest of Canada in jobs and growth. And under this government, investor confidence is in the basement.

Mr. Speaker, we should not settle for being in the middle of the pack. We should not stop until we have the best business environment for growth. No province needs growth more than Newfoundland and Labrador does, so we must set our standards higher. Failure is not an option.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: And while we are at it, we will also strive to be the best in health outcomes, education outcomes, immigration, population growth, jobs growth and quality of life. We will reach these goals, not just by talking about them but by putting into effect decisive plans of action that chart our course from where we are to where we aspire to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. CROSBIE: There's a lot of chatter going on.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: A government I lead will be a government that demands progress and delivers results. Newfoundland and Labrador is a special place. We have a unique culture, natural ecology and a great potential. Even the government opposite acknowledges the potential, but that's not enough. What we need is a government that will seize the opportunities of this province that will give people jobs and our economy a boost. It's what we need, but it's not what we're seeing.

Premier Ball's letter of March 20, 2020, to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau summarizes the story of this province's missed opportunities and sad decline under the Liberals. I call this the

run-out-of-time letter. I quote: “While all provinces are having challenges, our particular situation is driven by our lack of fiscal capacity before the crisis and is now compounded by the collapse of oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic.”

When we ran out of time, the Bank of Canada extended us a credit card and we’ve been living on it ever since. I won’t dwell on the gory details of the financial mess we’re in because the public already know we’re bankrupt unless backed up by federal credit, actual or implied. This is the sorry result of five years of directionless Liberal rule.

The former premier wrote “... our lack of fiscal capacity before the crisis” The Liberals have been in government for five years. Five years before COVID-19 and the economic downturn. That’s five years they had to put our province on a better path. Five years of Liberal failure has not resulted in a better province.

Now, we have a new Premier who loves marine metaphors, but what has changed? Is he standing today to defend a budget that takes the helm in the blinding storm while spindrifts swirl and tempests roar? Or a budget that leaves the ship of state aimlessly adrift without a bearing on a safe harbour? The answer is clear from the budget.

For Liberals the time for action is always later. The constant Liberal mantra is: Why do today what you can put off until next year? Kick the can down the road. Never make a decision. Delay, delay, delay until finally, undeniably, out there for the world to see, the Premier finally tells the prime minister our province has run out of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: We did not need to run out of time. The bond-rating agencies, former Auditor General and political watchers have all warned about the province’s revenue problem. We did not need to run out of time, but run out of time the Liberals did.

Mr. Speaker, I will not dwell on the past because nothing can be done to change it now. I will continue to look forward to the future because I

do believe our province can have a bright one. The main value of looking back is to ensure we don’t make the same mistakes moving forward. This province’s future will be no brighter than its past, unless it learns from the mistakes that brought us here and changes course. The principal mistake that has cost Newfoundland and Labrador new investment, new revenue streams and new jobs is the failure to be decisive in seizing the opportunities before us.

The former premier said our province has run out of time, but it is the do-nothing Liberal government which has run out of time with the electorate. Voters have the habit of asking the ballot box question: Am I better off than I was when the government came in? In the case of today’s Liberal government, the question is: Am I better off than I was five years ago?

A look at a few economic indicators gives insight into how voters may answer this question come election time. These are from the Economy document. I won’t read into the record all the numbers, they’re easily referred to, but they involve GDP at market prices, retail sales, employment and labour force numbers, and there would be plenty of others. But to summarize, all these measures of economic well-being, including employment, are worse than they were when the Liberals came into power and worse than they were projected to be by the budget in 2015 – worse.

The Liberal government’s own budget numbers tell us all how the voters are likely to answer the question they’re asking. Yes, they will say, I am indeed worse off than I was five years ago.

One of the concerns of residents of this province is: What will happen to their electrical rates? Despite a Liberal promise that rate mitigation would be in place by January of this year, there’s still no clear plan on how the province will ensure electricity ratepayers and taxpayers do not bear the burden of soaring rates when Muskrat Falls hydroelectric power begins coming online in 2021.

Without any explanation, the current Premier trashed the Ball government’s rate mitigation negotiation with the federal Liberals and started all over again, citing friction with Nalcor. What went wrong with the previous Liberal plan?

What are the prospects for the next generation of negotiations? How are they different from the previous generation? No one outside the Premier's circle knows, except that prospects for mitigation are suddenly linked to the so-called Atlantic Loop or should it be called the Quebec loop?

Anyone who looks at the proposal thoughtfully will realize the Liberal government is being played by Quebec. The Atlantic Loop is a Trojan horse for Quebec to gain market dominance in the Maritimes. The Atlantic Loop is a federally financed scheme to build transmission lines into the Maritimes, so Quebec can sell their excess hydro power to the Maritimes. This excess Quebec power will replace coal-fire generation, a worthy goal, but it will be Quebec selling this green power, not us. It will not be green power from Muskrat Falls and it will not be any future green power from Gull Island. It won't be our excess power that gets sold. That leaves Gull Island once again a stranded asset.

The federal government didn't pay for our Muskrat transmission assets, but it will pay for transmission assets used by Quebec. Think about that and think about whose interests the federal government favours.

The Atlantic Loop is a federal Liberal plan for Quebec to extend their dominance of electricity markets into Atlantic Canada. By jumping on the Atlantic Loop bandwagon, this province's Liberal government is jumping into a bed made by Quebec and the pro-Quebec Trudeau Liberals. It's not an Atlantic Loop they will be getting; it's a Quebec loop that subordinates Atlantic Canada to Quebec's dominance and control.

Is that really in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador? Is it really something the government opposite ought to be cheerleading? Or is this one of those times when putting province before party means standing up and fighting for Newfoundland and Labrador's interests?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Dark as these days may be, we, as PCs, are called to action by our heritage as the party which delivered the Atlantic Accord

and Hibernia. Those achievements were opposed, heckled, criticized at the time; but they founded an industry, which has generated tremendous wealth and jobs and will generate yet greater and transformative wealth and jobs if leaders of will and vision meet the challenge of history and step in with the dramatic level of support invoked by Brian Mulroney.

We have only to find a willing partner in Ottawa to step up in a dramatic way to work together with a PC government of this province to deliver the joint federal-provincial jobs and recovery plan and the vision which will create confidence in a prosperous future.

We need a willing partner and a fair deal in Ottawa to unlock our offshore wealth and jobs. That partner is not the Liberal Trudeau government. We have a need for a fair deal from Ottawa on other issues the Liberals have failed to resolve for five years.

We have all heard about systemic racism and, sadly, that challenge is all too real. Well, our province also suffers from systemic discrimination within Confederation. It takes a champion to challenge a system.

Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister O'Regan have done nothing to help create jobs in this province. The federal major transfer tables published in the federal Finance Minister's Fiscal Update of December 2019, show us – in a word – getting the short end of the stick. Major transfers include the Canada Health Transfer, Canada Social Transfer and Equalization. We get no equalization.

We will receive \$773 million in 2020-21; Nova Scotia, \$3.6 billion; New Brunswick, \$3.4 billion; Quebec, \$26.1 billion; Nunavut, \$1.8 billion; and even Alberta will get \$6.6 billion through major transfers. We get less than a billion. That's all of these major transfers.

Shortchanging by major transfers is not an equalization problem; it's an Atlantic Accord problem. In addition to abandoning the principal beneficiary negotiation with Ottawa last year, the Liberal government of this province will have to introduce amendments to the Atlantic Accord Act, which dilute joint management rights by being required to implement Bill C-69.

I don't know how this picture of subservience to Ottawa will change without the government of this province making it a national unity issue.

The Minister of Health for this Liberal government has speculated that we're only a territory and not really a province. I don't accept this defeatist attitude and I will fight for a fair deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. I will not give up on this province. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Success in winning over opinion in Ottawa and in the rest of the country comes from championing a loud and persistent case.

We have had a catastrophic population decline, precipitated by the federal fishery failure 26 years ago. That fishery failure was the result of a long-term mismanagement by the federal government. I will not let the actions or inactions of the federal government cause any more economic hardship for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to switch gears and talk about something else that was missing from the budget: community benefits agreements. It's also something that was missing from the answers which I sought from the Premier during Question Period today.

Our party has been advocating for the implementation of a Newfoundland and Labrador community benefits strategy for all future public infrastructure projects. We believe that when public funds are used, or public buildings are constructed, it should be local Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are employed on the project sites. It's unacceptable that workers from other provinces come in to our province and carry out jobs which could be filled by local residents, especially when these local residents are ready, willing and able to work.

Community benefits agreements would put Newfoundland and Labrador workers first. They would also give subcontractors from this province a boost and give consideration to the

employment of apprentices and underrepresented groups.

Is it the Premier's responsibility to ensure that jobs are available to the people of the province? If so, I urge the Premier to take the community benefits agreements policy and ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are given jobs first.

Mr. Speaker, residents of this province have been commuting for work for decades. Ontario and Alberta have been good to our workers, but due to the global economic decline, jobs outside of the province are no longer as numerous as they once were. To make things even more difficult, rotational workers have an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 and the worries of bringing it home to their loved ones.

I've heard from many rotational workers who have emailed me, written me or called my office. While they appreciate the reduced isolation requirement as paired with the COVID testing announced some six weeks ago, they are still forced to miss out on key family moments. I will continue to fight for rotational workers, and I'm glad that the current Premier and chief medical officer of Health responded to my calls for point-of-entry testing for rotational workers.

The Finance Minister has said that this is a COVID budget. That may be true, but COVID should not be used as an excuse to justify job losses. COVID cannot be used as an excuse for inaction.

During the very first days of the public health pandemic, in response to my suggestion, the former premier formed an all-party Committee. This Committee was essential in sharing information between MHAs and implementing key public health measures. The all-party Committee ensured that quick decisions were made and the health of the population protected. Its demise does not look good on the current administration. It looks like a step back from collaboration, a step back from transparency and a step back from putting the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians ahead of all others.

While I am on the topic of COVID-19, I do want to express a moment of gratitude to our chief

medical officer of Health and her team, our health care workers, our front-line workers and all those who continue to deliver key services to the people of the province. Thank you for supporting the residents of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, *Budget 2020* does not give me assurances that the people of the province will be better off because of the decisions contained in it. When I read the budget, I saw job losses, task forces and a government which does not take swift and decisive action.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot change the words of the budget; I cannot change the inaction of the Liberal government, but as I remarked earlier, I will always champion the residents of the province. I will continue to question the government on the lack of a jobs plan; I will push for jobs in our offshore arena; I will stand by the people who work at Come By Chance; I will listen to the concerns of small business owners; but, most of all, I will stand up for future jobs and prosperity for each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My friends, this feels like the end of one journey but a beginning of , and I want to thank the people of Humber - Gros Morne for giving me the great honour of representing them in this House of Assembly.

Decades ago, I spent a couple of weeks on the road with my father and uncle as they campaigned themselves on the West Coast of our beautiful Island. Newfoundland and Labrador was a different place back then. In a way, it was impossible to conceive the province would become what it has – pre-oil boom, pre-

moratorium. Indeed, we have come a long way, yet we still have a long ways to go.

We need more diversity here in the Legislature and beyond, to take a gender-plus lens when it comes to decision-making, along with a healthy Indigenous lens. The province needs more progress on truth and reconciliation. Indigenous voices are being heard. I personally appreciate the frank conversations that I have had with multiple leaders. It's important to our government to work closely with Indigenous partners and I pledge to continue to do so.

Decades ago on that West Coast, I was introduced to a part of the province that looked more like a painting than the real world through my young eyes in the back seat of a Ford station wagon. I remember feeling a sense of awe and looking out at the ocean crashing against the shore with the background of the green mountains off in the distance on the other side, and thinking about just how special this place is – a feeling that, frankly, has never wavered. I met people there that would give me the warmest hug, as they knew my dad from when he taught long ago in Stephenville.

I was also introduced to the ideas and ideals of what it meant, what it still means, to commit yourself to being part of public service, the responsibility of it and never forgetting who you represent and why. I listened to the ideas of how health and education must always be supported and fostered and that no matter what we may hear from detractors at home and abroad that this place, our home, is worth fighting for.

I've carried that West Coast journey with me and it's always smouldered deep inside, no matter if I was in an operating room in Baltimore or in a tent doubling as an emergency room in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It's a call, frankly, that we all have answered and a feeling we all have felt, no matter our backgrounds or our political stripe. We are all here for this province, its undefeatable people, its undeniable future. That journey of decades ago has ended here today, but another one, my friends, has just begun.

President Lincoln contended that a person's true character can be revealed by giving them power. That applies to all of us here today, not just me.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador want to know what we will do, collectively, not just the Premier, not just the Liberal Party, not the PCs, the NDP or the Newfoundland Alliance.

The people want to know, collectively, how each and every one of us working together will help deliver this place from the crisis that we are now in, because the pandemic and the virus don't care about who leads us. Oil prices are indifferent to political parties and their policies. Poverty, the health of our seniors: those are not Liberal issues; those are Newfoundland and Labrador issues. These are our issues, everyone in this room here today, everyone occupying a position in public service and every person outside the House of Assembly; every person that we represent on this very floor. We are responsible, my friends, to find those answers.

It's a lot on all of our shoulders. The pandemic is no longer at arm's length. As we have seen elsewhere in Canada, it doesn't take much for the spread to rebound as thoughts of further lockdown continue to loom for many across our country.

Back in February, no one really understood the damage COVID-19 would cause to the economy, as well as to the population. We made, collectively, you all made, the tough calls and today we record the lowest number of cases in the country. Yes, it has come at a tremendous cost, but we have made the right choice with the welfare of the people of this province in mind. Talks of a second wave, as well as COVID-19 fatigue, present new challenges for each and every one of us, but we are better prepared today to face whatever comes next. If we continue to listen to the advice of Dr. Fitzgerald and Minister Haggie, we will all, collectively, make it through.

We've been successful, so far, in working with the federal government in supporting our oil industry and the thousands of workers here in the province living with the uncertainty we all feel. In my short time in office, our government has secured \$320 million from Ottawa to support oil and gas workers in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER FUREY: And \$26 million to support the Safe Return to School for students and teachers, alike, across our province. We've enlisted an experienced team representing industry and workers to make sound recommendations to government on how to best maximize that money. You can see it in *Budget 2020: Today. Tomorrow. Together.*

Our government is deeply committed to supporting families through these global health and economic crises. We managed to keep the deficit to \$1.8 billion, that's less than the forecasted \$2.1 billion. We've allocated close to \$100 million to future pressures associated with COVID-19; \$2.1 million is going to advance efforts to attract and retain immigrants to help stabilize our population. Small businesses and community organizations can avail of the \$30-million Small Business Assistance Program. Our budget includes more than \$20 million for tourism, arts and culture. They are the very fabric of this province and help build vibrant communities, particularly in our rural communities.

Budget 2020 also features exciting investments in the technology sector, which affects and is an investment in all other sectors. It contributes more than \$1.6 billion to the provincial economy while employing more than 4,000 people and it is set to add 2,000 more jobs in short order.

Speaking of jobs, I must highlight the fishery here. Newfoundland and Labrador was founded on the fishery and to this day it continues to be a major renewable industry in our province. More than \$9 million is being invested in its development for the future of the fishery in this budget.

We are also, of course, implementing \$25 a day child care, which will help unlock untold economic benefits. More money will go to support women's and anti-violence organizations and to provide stable housing and services to those who need them most.

The budget has roughly \$80 million for health care infrastructure funding. Among other budget highlights I'm proud of, there are investments and initiatives to develop the province's booming mining and continuing to contribute to

a future, a sustainable strong, responsible future in oil and gas.

Our government is focused on helping people as well with opportunities to live healthy and active lifestyles, even as we all, collectively, as families, try to navigate the nuances of COVID-19.

Like many of you, I wish I could snap my fingers and make it all better and raise the price of oil on a global stage, but no on can. If we're all being honest, we all know that. But the most worthy of things is worth the hardest fight, that's why, collectively, every one of you and every one of us, collectively, can not stop that fight.

As a government, we're not going to stop fighting for change, for a prosperous future for Newfoundland and Labrador. I just don't want to waste time fighting each other instead. We have to be less partisan with each other. We have to put the province first. We are facing challenges today that no other government in this Legislature or the ones before have ever faced. This is not a generational challenge; this is a historic challenge.

To the Members opposite: I don't want to squander the opportunity to work together and to answer those who think that we, as Newfoundland and Labrador, are finished, that the credits are actually rolling on this movie, because nothing could be further from the truth. For those who believe that, they don't know our people, our history. We carve our own new roads, we write the best comeback stories, but I still hold true to that statement I made that we must try to put our differences aside and approach these challenges, collectively.

I will continue to invite the best minds to come to the table as we work through these tough challenges. Ideas are a hot commodity and, thankfully, we come from a place with a surplus. Right now, we need the doers. We need the ones determined to answer why the most inventive and effective version of how.

One other battle that we all face here today is one that can inflict more damage than any pandemic and can have far greater reach. It's against the battle of pessimism and negativity. It is indeed one of the toughest battles we face.

I had a reporter, just last week, ask me why I would want this job because the place is almost bankrupt and suffocating under the weight of its own debt. Social media is full of cynics, you've all heard them, self-proclaimed experts, all with more attitude than answers.

My friends, collectively this Legislature, we cannot allow this pessimistic infection to spread, and that means it must stop here. There's no doubt that we've heard enough political rhetoric in the last six months to last six life times but I think we all need to hold each other to a higher, more responsible Newfoundland and Labrador standard; to encourage respectful, insightful debate and to have the courage to stand up for ideas that are what's best for the province and to passionately challenge those that are not. Not for party turf, Facebook hits, or personal gains because we don't have the wiggle room right now for an unwise choice. Not now, not against what we face.

I know some of you over there and some outside are thinking that I'm naïve, that it won't happen. That we will wait for the grand moment when it can be said that I couldn't even live up to this standard. Well, the challenge is yours. If that is the case, I won't just live with it but I will learn from it. No one is perfect, but at the very least in this room, in the proud place that it surrounds, we should expect only the very best of ourselves and each other.

From that old Ford station wagon travelling through the towns and bays along the West Coast, I know now that the journey that brought me here today is only a midpoint in a race, a base camp of a climb. I know exactly how hard it will be. I know that what we will ask of ourselves, in this Legislature, will pale in comparison to what we will ask of the province. But between doubt and boldness, I choose to be bold every single time and I hope you all do, too.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank my colleague for that very inspiring speech, because he asked us all to rise and to rise above political partisanship and rise to face the people of the province, and I think that's exactly what we are trying to achieve in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, allow me to thank the many, many, many people from the Department of Finance who spent many hours, many days, many nights working very, very hard. I want to thank them for their dedication and for their efforts, for their ongoing work on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also want to recognize the officials in every department that came here day after day and allowed scrutiny on every line of the budget – every single line of the budget, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleagues in this House for their efforts of taking the time to do that scrutiny. I think it's very important. It is part of the requirements of ensuring that we are held accountable for every dollar that is spent. It's important that we analyze and consider and review. I know that there were countless hours spent on looking at every single expenditure of this government, so I thank my colleagues – all of my colleagues – in this House.

I also want to thank the Officers of this House of Assembly for taking the time and efforts and the late nights, some very late nights, Mr. Speaker. Eleven o'clock at night, I believe, one night we all sat here and scrutinized and did the deliberations that are required. I also want to thank the former minister of Finance for all his guidance and leadership and efforts.

I started this budget talking about four core principles. I'll read them again for those who may not have had the opportunity: promoting physical and mental health, growing our population, expanding technology and developing our resources were kind of the foundations, the four pillars, the four principles upon which this budget was built.

I also recognized in this budget that we are in the middle of a pandemic and that which we had planned, that which we had moved towards, the

direction that we had moved towards have all been impacted. I can tell you that growth in the province in 2019 – we grew by, I think, 4 per cent of GDP. We are moving towards a balanced budget. I know in Natural Resources we had welcomed eight new entrants offshore. We had record land sales, Mr. Speaker.

Offshore Newfoundland and Labrador, we had started Equinor who was moving forward with their project. Husky, under our leadership, was moving forward with their project in Argentina and then the pandemic hit, and we're still suffering through that pandemic. This is not in Newfoundland and Labrador; this is indeed the entire globe.

Everywhere you look around the world, there are struggles. I can say to this hon. House, I can say to the people of the province, I am very, very proud of how Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have risen to this challenge. Thankful to the guidance of our colleague in the House of Assembly, Dr. Haggie, who is Minister of Health, thank you to Dr. Fitzgerald who's our chief medical officer. They have guided us, and as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians we have followed their advice and we've kept each other safe. I'm petitioning all of us to continue to do that.

As we move forward and as we progress through this, we'll get to the other side of it. We'll get through this together, but I also know there are many, many, many people in this province that are hurting because of job loss due to the pandemic. It's not that this government has done anything. I listened with intent to all the leaders of this House and actually every speaker in this House, and I heard a lot about the job losses but, again, I say to the people of the province, stay strong. Stay strong. This is something that's happening around the world. We are going to come through this.

I can tell you in this budget we have supports for families with \$25-a-day child care, with money for education. There's \$20 million for laptops; \$22 million to increase for the Education Action Plan; there's \$363 million for Memorial University; there's \$123 million for the income supplement; good investments for families. We'll get through this.

For communities, Mr. Speaker, we've made hundreds of millions – I think it's \$116 million in investments to municipalities for infrastructure, which will bring jobs and it will bring services to municipalities. I can tell you I've heard from Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador for their supports. I've heard from the business community.

Let me talk about what's in the budget for jobs and economic development. We all know that small business, the backbone of our economy, has been suffering as well because of COVID. They've been impacted. Yes, we know they've been impacted and we've been able to take the very few dollars that we have in this province and we put it together in a small business support fund. I thank my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, for bringing that project forward, they've announced the investments there; \$30 million for that program and for supports for the community sector.

Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you enough how important this is. So when the Members opposite cackle, yell and scream about jobs, jobs, jobs, I say that we are doing the action, we are making those supports.

I can say to the arts community, the arts community has reached out and said the millions of dollars that we've made available – I think it's a million dollars extra in ArtsNL and more money available through the tourism program to support the arts community and the music community – has been very well appreciated and they know how important those supports are to growing our economy and to growing our opportunity.

The \$17 million for the tech fund; the \$6 million to grow the oil and gas supply and service industry; the close to \$3 million for digital solutions for business; then there's the fishery and tourism and food security and forestry and mining.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this budget – this budget focuses on families, it focuses on jobs and economic supports and it focuses on communities. That's what this budget does. That's what this budget does, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: I'm perplexed – I'm perplexed, Mr. Speaker, I have to say this. I listened again to the Premier when he talked about how important it is that we work together and how important it is that we support one another and how important it is we rise above partisanship. But I'm confused, Mr. Speaker, I believe I understand from media reports that Members opposite will be supporting this budget, yet I heard words like: it's egregious. Now, egregious means it's outstandingly bad and shocking. So if it is outstandingly bad and shocking, I'm confused because I thought I heard that the Members opposite were supporting this.

Then I listened to the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon and he spoke about the oil and gas industry. Now, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that over the last six, seven, eight months of my life, I've been consumed with supporting the oil and gas industry. For the last five years, I've been supporting the oil and gas industry, as someone pointed out. We have delivered eight new entrants in our offshore. We have Equinor about to start a project offshore. We are able to actually get Husky to start their project. Yes, the pandemic has interrupted all those things.

The Member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, did point out, he has a PC action plan for jobs and growth in our offshore. Well, I'm glad he's supporting us in our endeavors because I can tell you that letters that I wrote, interventions that I made to the federal government, he's taken almost word for word and put in his plan, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going back months, April, March when the things that the Leader of the Opposition spoke about, we've been working towards.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we've put in this budget the acceleration of the exploration initiative. We've put in supports to understand the seismic offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. We have supported and encouraged offshore development. My colleague has started a task force to take the money that the Premier and he have been able to get from Ottawa and reinvest it in our offshore – hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars. We support offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have worked with Noia and CAPP and NATI and NEIA and the St. John's Board of Trade, and the unions to ensure that we were working cohesively together, collaboratively to support our offshore. Yes, Mr. Speaker, there will be results. There are results, Mr. Speaker.

We know that this is not a Newfoundland and Labrador challenge, it indeed is a global challenge, Mr. Speaker, and we have made progress. I am proud of that progress. I am proud of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have worked so hard – so hard to keep each other safe, who are supporting one another.

I ask everyone in this House to support this budget, to support what this government is doing to people, for people, to make sure that they have what they need to get through this pandemic.

We want the strength, we want the growth, we want the opportunity in Newfoundland and Labrador and that's indeed what this budget delivers.

I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to everyone's support in this House for the actions and the effort of this government and for all that we are achieving for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion moved and seconded is that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of government.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Division, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader is good?

Opposition House Leader is good?

Third Party House Leader is good?

The independents are good?

The motion is Motion 1 on the Order Paper that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, or the Budget Speech.

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

Those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Furey, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Haggie, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Davis, Ms. Coady, Mr. Loveless, Ms. Stoodley, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Warr, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Haley, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Crosbie, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Wakeham, Mr. Lester, Ms. Evans, Mr. Petten, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Parrott, Mr. Pardy, Mr. Paul Dinn, Ms. Conway Ottenheimer, Mr. Tibbs, Ms. Coffin, Mr. James Dinn, Mr. Brown, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Lane.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 37 and the nays: zero.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, Concurrence Motion for the Social Services Committee, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the report of the Social Services Committee be now concurred in.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

It is indeed an honour as the Chair of the social sector to bring to the House some information that was learned over many hours of very detailed review and examination by the Members of my Committee and the various departments.

I'd just like to introduce to everyone watching and reminding everybody in this Legislature what is comprised in the social sector: the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development; Department of Education; Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities; Health and Community Services; Justice and Public Safety; and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

What I'd like to do with some time that I have allocated, Mr. Speaker, is walk through some highlights of what occurred, as best I'm able to recall, because there were many hours, but thanks to the audio recording we can certainly go back and review.

As we've indicated, Estimates is an exercise of looking at the entire budget and it is very much a line-by-line exercise. It gives a chance for Members of the Opposition and the independents to ask questions as to exactly how government is spending its money; whether they are spending it as indicated and whether and why changes are being made on a year-to-year basis. So it's really a forensic exercise.

Over the course of that line by line, of course, there's always a lot of opportunity to explore policy decisions. Why are you doing this? Why shouldn't you do that? It's a good to and fro. It's probably, in many more ways, much more informative than Question Period because you're just trying to reveal exactly why things are happening as they are. It's very much a roll-up-your-sleeves exercise. The ministers participate with their key staff and away we go.

Starting out with Children, Seniors and Social Development. We met on October 19, and it comprises the following sections that you go through: the Minister's Office and Executive Support. Also, inside this office are: Corporate Services and Performance Improvement, Programs and Policy, Child and Youth Services and Seniors and Social Development, as the name of the department suggests.

Just a couple of highlights that I had identified in this department. There are something like 725 staff involved. It's a relatively large department. There's a lot of responsibility and, of course, it deals with so many of the social responsibilities of the provincial government.

Some of the things that I wanted to talk about, and just in no particular order, this is how I'm going to go through each of the departments, but I just wanted to indicate, for example, under social Programs and Policy, you're often wondering about caseload and how many caseloads does each provincial social worker have a responsibility for.

It's interesting that through investments of this government, we've actually been able to set the ratio and work with a ratio of one social worker per 20 active cases in Labrador. So much of the challenge with reaching out to that part of our province has been ensuring that we have indeed those supports available.

I'm pleased to see that we have certainly been working hard to increase the number of allocated staff. The ratio is actually 1-22 in Newfoundland so we are certainly recognizing, I'm pleased to say as a representative of Central Labrador, that we are responding to the needs.

Another interesting part that I took notes on that I thought was quite interesting is that we have, and we hear a lot about this, and there is an inquiry that's coming very soon, is certainly dealing with children in care. I know a lot of the discussion from the Opposition Members dealt with how many children are actually in care. The officials indicated at the time of the Estimate that there are some 970 children in care, and 290 of them are Indigenous. It's a hefty responsibility, Mr. Speaker.

Another part, of course, not just on the children side and so on, but also on the seniors. Some interesting investments there that were highlighted in our budget, and I thought it would be a good chance to just remind this House about what is happening there. *Budget 2020* identifies \$123 million going into a Seniors' Benefit. There's \$12 million identified for adult literacy.

I was very pleased just a little while ago to – and a part of my role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Education – to witness a recognition of a woman who had, through the support of the province, gone back to receive her Grade 12 and was moving on to further studies. I just remember how emotionally driven she was and we were to celebrate with her on that day. It's these kinds of investments, Mr. Speaker, that really are helping the people of our province.

Sitting in Labrador as I am, I'm only aware of the program when I come to St. John's, but there's another \$2.1 million that's been identified for Metrobus and GoBus passes. Given that we half our population sitting here in the provincial capital, I understand the importance of that for people who need to commute and have that support.

I've had the pleasure the last several days as we are witnessing history in this House watching for the first time one of our Members being able to bring their children in. I'm pleased to see this recognized focus on all aspects on things that we can do to make sure that, and as we look at the number of women, for example, in this Legislature, recognizing that we really need this Legislature to reflect the demographics of our province and how so much more could be done. It's good to see us investing, for example, \$270,000 into a mother-baby plan and how that will certainly be helping all women achieve their best and being able to contribute to society.

We also have substantial monies allocated for a plan to develop a 10-year poverty reduction strategy, and I look forward to working on that. One of the questions raised by the Third Party today was about a living wage, and this is a policy strategy that some jurisdictions are certainly exploring, as I know we are as well. It's often raised as a suggestion. We are

certainly looking towards a poverty reduction strategy and I look forward to the results of that.

I note that I'm priced on my own age now, I'm in the 50-plus club, we have \$200,000 that we announced this year and it's to support the Seniors' Social Inclusion Initiative for the 50-plus clubs. That will certainly be well received.

It's been a difficult time these last seven months for so many folks who have been isolated. I can remember well the day that the bubbles were allowed to collapse with another bubble and the excitement where we reached out to our neighbours and it was good just to see somebody else in your home for a change. It's been tough. We are a social province, we are a social society and culture and it's good to see initiatives that will support that.

Moving on to the next department, and I want to make sure I don't run out of time because I want to go through them all. Education, a very big department, it has recently been combined to now include K-12 daycare, as well as post-secondary. It's a huge department, again, run by a capable minister and very capable deputy minister and staff, of which I had an opportunity to spend a lot of time with. I very much appreciate all that they do.

Education has had a big focus during the pandemic as we've had to close down so much of the education instruction, whether it be in daycares, through K-12, high school and post-secondary. It's been challenging as we try to reopen up our society and allow people to continue and finish their education programs, but, as well, be able to go on and live very productive lives.

Some of the highlights I had in there, well, first of all, some of the key departments: Administrative Support, Minister's Office and Executive Support. We provide a lot of assistance to educational agencies and committees, so all the various entities that one would hear about associated with education in our province, there is often a complete or at least partial support to all of them. It's in the range of serious dollars. It was fascinating, again, in the question and answer, to understand more how that works and how the money is strategically allocated.

A key part of the investment this year, and the need was recognizing that while we are very proud of the progress that Newfoundland and Labrador has made around the pandemic, we are getting prepared to ensure that if we do need to close our schools again, that we can slip back and ensure that students will be provided with Chromebooks and other instructional technology that will allow them to avail of education as much as possible. It won't work everywhere, Mr. Speaker, but we're going to do our best and there were substantial monies that were identified to support that.

I was also very pleased to see, again, representing Labrador – and why not have some bias – that, in fact, the delivery of the Chromebooks, for example, in the province – and this is why I noted it down – is actually well ahead of the delivery in Newfoundland. It's not a race, but certainly within Labrador, where we need to make sure that we are ready, often logistics are our challenge; glad to see that we are doing well in terms of getting these materials in the hands of the students and the teachers.

A lot of the questioning, of course, relates to class size and the need for adequate teachers and ensuring that the classes are not overcrowded and that teachers can have that important ratio. These are ratios that the department spoke a lot about in terms of making sure that there's good quality opportunity for learning. It was good to see that. Other departments that we examined in great detail, things like Curriculum Development; recall we have an English and a French school board, and contributions and supports to both of them are very important.

I'm just switching over now to Early Learning and Child Development, a very big part of this department. As so much of this House and this government have talked about in here, we are now advancing with \$25-a-day daycare costs for parents for regulated facilities. This is an important step forward on the affordability aspect for parents. It's a really important step; it's not the only step.

As I heard the Premier reference a little while ago when he announced this, along with the Education Minister, there are other steps that are going to be needed, and certainly we need to make sure we have the facilities in place. We

need to make sure we have the appropriate spaces available within those facilities. We need to make sure, most importantly, that we have the early childhood educators also available. That we have enough of them, that they're well trained and they're inspired and feeling supported by this province.

It's great to see us get going on this very important first step; I'm sure there are more to come. It was, again, fascinating to hear. In fact, the discussion was so involved during that one Estimates that we actually had to adjourn and recess and come back again about a week or so later on the 20th of October. So we actually just concluded the Estimates for Education on post-secondary. That's what we focused on a little earlier this week, and a lot of great exploration on support to Memorial University, to our college system and everything from the physical plan to the Atlantic Veterinary College, the contributions we make there, to adult literacy and institutional services. All very important and, again, very broad, very comprehensive focus on education throughout our province – very important.

I'm skipping over quickly because I don't want to run out of time. Another key department: Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities. We met on the 7th of October. A great range of responsibilities there, everything from environmental assessment and much of the monitoring through to the support and coordination that we have with the municipalities in this province.

You tend to see in the question and answer aspect, specialists in different departments responsible for certain questions, so you often need a pretty large team for those departments that have a very diverse set of responsibilities. Much was discussed there on municipal debt servicing, industrial water services, municipal operating grants and the gas tax. We often hear reference to the gas tax and how important that contribution of funding is for each of these municipalities and the ability to actually learn more. I found it quite informative for me.

Resettlement was another key topic. I made some notes on that. Recently, the community of Little Bay Islands was settled and we discussed at length some of the financial arrangements

around that and how government supported the relocation of those residents.

Flood risk mapping, which is a big one, I'm going to introduce a bit more bias. It's an issue we've been dealing with in Lake Melville on flood risk mapping. We've just seen the compilation and completion of a very important document that will guide future decision-making in our community. I noted that the minister and staff identified that Placentia would be the next region, next community that would have that exercise identified.

We talked a lot about boil-water orders; ones that are in effect, what they mean and how we're working to address them. The incorporation of recycling programs and so on, the natural areas group. Again, very successfully debated and discussed as a department.

I wanted to also just end it a little bit, because it's close to my heart and soul, is that of climate change and a great exploration of implications of different moves. For example, the new \$100,000 has just been identified to support the climate, economy and society initiative that the Harris Centre has going. I would reach out to all of my colleagues, by the way, in this House of Assembly to ensure that you have someone – or people who are interested in becoming involved, there's a citizen's forum. I've asked Mr. Rob Greenwood at the Harris Centre to let me know if some districts have not yet contributed candidates to sit on that forum, that I'll certainly be reminding you to try to shake the bushes a little bit and see if you can find interested persons who might like to get in there.

Perhaps one of the most – well, certainly the largest in terms of expenditures for our province is that of Health and Community Services – and my colleague, the minister. This is a department that has had serious demands on it, not just from the high rates of chronic disease and aging population that we face in our province, our densities and so on, but this COVID-19 pandemic.

So many speakers here today – well, frankly, over the last several months – have recognized the role of the chief medical officer, the Premier, the All-Party Committee and the Minister of Health and Community Services for what

they've done and how they've guided us through it. It is very much the envy of the country. I'm also aware of inquiries from other jurisdictions around the world who've said just how did you do it. Well, we did it with an amazing team that has really excelled.

It was also good to see some reporting on the great progress towards recovery actions; some 21 of those actions have been accomplished. Investments in virtual care have now been accelerated under COVID. We have a \$3.3 million investment that was identified in the budget.

An interesting thing that I know the minister liked to speak about and he's been able to keep year over year expenditures to essentially no change. When you look at the demands on our system and what they've been able to do to find more efficient ways and better outcomes, he and his team are to be commended on that.

Justice and Public Safety, a very important department as well. It was really interesting to hear the responses of the police agencies, the aspects of justice, courts and so on and the role that we play there. Again, very informative. I must say that so much of the issues we deal with require very informed decision-making and staff.

Then our final section was Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. Again, those folks were there to explain their responsibilities.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have run out of time, unfortunately, because I have many more notes, but I thank you for the time.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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