



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 20

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Tuesday

March 21, 2023

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

First of all, in the Speaker's gallery today I would like to welcome parents of MHA Brian Warr, Margie and Harold, and his sister Jane; they are visiting us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In the public gallery, also joining us this afternoon for a Member's statement, I'd like to welcome Rick Fennemore, Principal of Bishop Abraham Elementary and Henda Akoubi, Child and Youth Programs Counsellor with the Association for New Canadians.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also joining us from the Town of Triton is Mayor Jason Roberts and Deputy Mayor Pat Williams.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia West - Bellevue, Stephenville - Port au Port, Ferryland, St. John's Centre and Baie Verte - Green Bay.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker

Today I rise in this hon. House to recognize the Lions Clubs that play a huge role in

communities within the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue. When caring people join together, roll up their sleeves and take action to make their community better, it's truly a beautiful thing.

The Lions are an international, non-profit organization made up of volunteers who come together to raise money to give back to their communities in a time of need. They support our seniors, our youth, the sick and many others in their communities. They come together to take action and serve their neighbours.

From helping individuals in need, supporting other non-profit organizations and being strong community leaders, I stand here with pride today to know we have such a great organization in our communities for people to utilize and admire.

I am calling on all constituents in our beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue to support the Lions for the plethora of support they provide on a daily basis.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me to say thank you for their dedication in making our communities stronger.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Being the parent of a sick child is perhaps one of the scariest times in a parent's life, states Stephanie MacNeil.

A group of moms from the Bay St. George area, who shared the unfortunate events of having a sick child, developed a connection like no other. Although they all shared different stories, they were there for each other over the years with an ear to listen, a

shoulder to cry on or a hug coming from someone who was experiencing a similar journey.

In 2017, this group of moms, who named themselves the Frequent Flyers, decided they wanted to give back to an organization that had given so much to them: the Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation.

With support from local businesses, the group organized fundraisers such as dances, silent auctions and, most recently, a steak dinner and dance. Their efforts have raised over \$20,000 to date. Besides financial assistance, the group also provides much-needed emotional support to other families in the area going through similar experiences.

Today I rise to salute the members of the Frequent Flyers: Stephanie MacNeil, Shelly Collier, Candice Bartlett, Robyn O'Quinn, Nancy Blanchard, Nadine Butt, Stephanie Downey and Valeda Drake.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the individuals of the Ferryland District who were selected to represent Newfoundland and Labrador in the Canada Winter Games in PEI from February 18 to March 5.

In attendance were athletes: Mike Gosine from Tors Cove, Rachael Tuff from Witless Bay, Alex Kennedy and Jack Kennedy from Bay Bulls, Danielle Arbour from the Goulds, coach Mark Lee from the Goulds, managers Jenna Connolly from the Goulds and Tracy Coady from Cape Broyle.

Being chosen to participate in a sporting event of this magnitude just proves the

dedication and hard work that each individual put forth to their chosen sport to be selected to participate. At this time, I would like to send out a special congratulations to 17-year-old Michael Gosine of Tors Cove, who took home a bronze medal at the games in men's boxing in the 75-kilogram weight class.

Please join me in congratulating all individuals from the Ferryland District as well as from parts of Newfoundland and Labrador who represented the province so well in the Canada Winter Games.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This past Friday, March 17, I attended Bishop Abraham Elementary's cultural fair as part of Education Week activities to celebrate the diversity of their school community. School staff worked closely with Henda Akoubi of the Association for New Canadians to organize the event, which was also open to the public. Inclusion and diversity is at the heart of everything Principal Rick Fennemore and his amazing staff do. Earlier this year, I had the privilege of attending their virtual visit to Mexico.

Bishop Abraham is a centre-city, K-6 school with 30 staff and approximately 255 students representing over 25 countries: Vietnam, Israel, India, Jordan, Libya, Philippines, Ukraine, Turkey, Eritrea, Sudan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Syria, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Jamaica, South Africa, Ethiopia, Morocco, Afghanistan, China, Lebanon, Peru, Oman, Albania, Tunisia, Togo and, of course, Canada.

Principal Fennemore says that they are fortunate at their school to learn from the many cultures within their walls. Better

Together was the theme for Education Week 2023. The cultural fair was an opportunity to educate and celebrate all the amazing cultures in their school.

I ask Members to join me in congratulating Henda Akoubi and the dedicated staff of Bishop Abraham on a successful cultural fair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

B. WARR: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise, acknowledge and celebrate the most influential person in my life. Born in Argentina, the fifth oldest of Nan's 13 children. Educated at St. Patrick's Convent, she pursued her studies in commercial and was employed with Confederation Life Insurance prior to having her family.

Life could have taken a different turn for Mom. My grandmother was hanging out clothes, turned to see her two-year-old daughter being carried away in the arms of a stranger. A fisherman from a foreign trawler offered money to Nan for her child. He left empty handed.

Mom made sure we all knew how to swim. It was important to her and it was passed down through our generations.

Curling was her sport and she played well into her 80s. She represented her province at the senior ladies lawn bowling championships and for sure Mom is Brad Gushue's biggest fan.

A proud townie, Mom and Dad returned back to the East Coast upon retirement. Mom and Dad reside in their own home where she loves feeding her birds daily and is an avid viewer of anything newsworthy.

I invite my colleagues to join our family in celebrating today 90 years in the life of our lovely Mom, Margie Warr.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

This province has a strategic plan for financial improvement that ensures prudent fiscal governance and responsible debt management. The objective is to balance budgets, transform and modernize government, and manage and lower debt.

Under debt management our focus is on optimizing the sinking fund performance, enhancing the province's liquidity position and improving Treasury management.

Just two weeks ago, I joined the Premier at the London Stock Exchange to officially launch the province's European borrowing program. Newfoundland and Labrador has the option now to issue bonds in the European capital market, in addition to the existing domestic Canadian market, to meet its borrowing requirements.

Diversifying the province's investor base and broadening the reach to international markets provides an opportunity to continue to lower borrowing costs. This is part of our commitment to improve Treasury management.

The province has also developed a Future Fund, taking a portion of non-renewable resource revenues and investing it for debt repayment and future opportunities. In this fiscal year, we have contributed \$157 million to this fund.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Speaker, our plan is working.

In just two days I will deliver my fourth budget as Minister of Finance and I look forward to further sharing how we are responsibly managing the province's finances while continuing to invest strategically.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. As the Minister of Finance mentions the budget, I must take the opportunity to outline what the minister's budget must include.

The budget must include real advantages in primary care. Signing retention bonuses are one thing, but this budget must find a way to provide primary care to the 136,000 people who don't have a family doctor. The budget must reopen the Whitbourne emergency room, the Bonavista ER and many other ERs whose doors are closed more often than they are open.

The budget must also help make life more affordable for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by reducing the price of food, preventing the carbon tax from increasing the price of home heating fuel and gasoline.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, it costs too much to live in a province where health care, early childhood education and seniors are suffering due to the Liberal government's inaction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Fiscal management should be inherent to any sitting government. We thank the public service for their work in this, but we remind the people of this province and this government that \$157 million could have been invested in many other ways that would make life more affordable for residents, like taking the HST off the cost of home heating.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to introduce an initiative regarding the coverage of certain medications under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

I am pleased to announce today, that effective March 1, 2023, coverage for several anti-coagulants or blood thinners have been expanded under the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program to open benefits to Apixaban, Rivaroxaban and Edoxaban. Changing these drugs to open benefits allows easier access for individuals taking these medications.

These drugs are effective for a number of conditions including the prevention of stroke and treating blood clots. Prior to this initiative, these medications were only available through a special authorization process. Removing the requirement for special authorization improves access to these medications, improves the quality of life for affected patients by reducing blood

work requirements and helps limit the demands on our health care system. Approximately 3,500 patients are anticipated to benefit from this change in listing status.

Speaker, the change in status of these drugs on the provincial Prescription Drug Program signals our government's continued focus on improving access to health care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Speaker, any time there is an enhancement of access to medications, it is good news for the people who need them. In this case, approximately 3,500 patients in our province.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program serves as a critical program and needs to be enhanced wherever possible. However, there are many in our province that do not have access to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program and are falling through the cracks. The cost-of-living crisis in our province has driven many families to the brink and have forced many to decide between food, housing, heat and their medications.

This is indeed a good announcement for 3,500 people in our province, but I encourage this Liberal government to also think of the countless more that are faced with impossible decisions every single day.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

Speaker, right now, in this province and in this country, we are in need of universal drug coverage. We do thank them for this change, but, at the same time, we need to be working towards universal drug coverage for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians currently go without drugs or, in some cases, pill splitting or other things.

So we do thank them for this change, but, at the same time, we encourage that we need to work towards universal pharmacare.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

The fishing industry was blindsided last week with another blow to the coming season. It took over 100 union members to storm a federal minister's office to get a meeting to discuss the issue.

Premier, we're only weeks away from the fishing season, what are you doing to ensure a strong season for our fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, we have a good relationship with the FFAW and stakeholders involved to ensure that this fishing season is positioned well, despite the challenges in the marketplace. I think both processors and fisher people alike understand that there are significant global challenges within the marketplace beyond anyone's control, Mr. Speaker, but we are here to ensure that both sides are working together as the minister has done so eloquently in the past.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the fishing industry needs action here to ensure this industry is viable in this province.

Recently, your Minister of Fisheries said he is content with the status quo in our fishery. We have crab frozen in storage, mackerel uncertainty, capelin in critical zone and now another blow to the crab harvesters in our province.

Premier, has your government fallen out of touch with the reality of the fishing industry in our province?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I must say it's a privilege to be here after just getting back from the Boston seafood show, which is basically the reset.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAGG: It's always a great opportunity to get up here and talk about our fishery – the strong, vibrant fishery we have in this province. I think, right now, the realistic side of it is that our fishery is into probably a reset. I think it's been the understanding by everybody.

I've had meetings with the ASP, as well as the FFAW. I continue to have meetings with these people. I know they are meeting jointly to try and work on something right now in the fishery. The Member opposite talked about the issue from yesterday. That is a federal situation that has to be dealt with. It has to do with some linings offshore and the biomass, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, this industry shouldn't be in reset. It should be surging forward to a \$5-billion viability in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Once again, the Liberals are reactive instead of proactive.

I ask the Premier: When are you going to pick up the phone and call your friends in Ottawa to ensure our province's strongest fishery remains viable this season?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we're all incredibly proud of the fishery here in this province, Mr. Speaker. It's part of why we're here as people and it's something that, I think, both sides of the House support.

We continue to have conversations with our federal colleagues with respect to the importance of the fishery, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. It is a vibrant industry. It will continue to be a vibrant industry and we will continue to ensure that their voice is heard in Ottawa and elsewhere.

The fact of the matter is in that there are global forces at play right now taking China

out of the marketplace, taking Russia out of the marketplace and an excessive supply of snow crab, for example, in cold storage. There's nothing I can do about that. There's nothing the Member opposite can do about that, but what I will do is continue to ensure that the people in Ottawa understand how important the fishery is for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, well, you tout that you have such a great relationship with Ottawa. Let's see something produced at the end of the day so the fishing industry is viable in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Under a Liberal administration, we have seen constant failures in our province's fishery. We have a Premier and a minister who allowed the federal government to walk in and cancel the mackerel fishery.

I ask the Premier: Will you call on your federal government to reopen the mackerel fishery or will you remain silent on this issue like you have on the 3L crab?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and once again it is a privilege to get up here.

Our fishery is very strong in this province, Mr. Speaker – very strong. As I said in my last answer, I just got back from the Boston seafood show. Crab today sells for \$5.50 on the market, Mr. Speaker. That's what it sells for into the United States and around the world. So we've done all we could. When we were at the Boston seafood show we had a booth – we were one of the only

provinces across Canada to have their own booth set up at the Boston seafood show and we were very busy. I can attest to that because I was at the booth for most of the trade show.

We are doing our part; we are represented. When you come around for Newfoundland and Labrador, people understand we have good, quality fish coming from this province and it is unfortunate that the forces of the war in Ukraine have caused havoc into that.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

I remind Members to put your phones on silent or vibrate, please.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

And the fishing industry is a very viable one here, not because of the policies of that administration, but because of the people in the industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: If the Premier would spend more time supporting the fishing industry than suing his own Privacy Commissioner, then maybe we'd be in a better place here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

D. BRAZIL: Can the Premier tell the people of this province why his government is suing the Privacy Commissioner in order to stop him from investigating the cyberattack?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, the cyberattack was incredibly stressful to the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, it is important that a robust, fair review be undertaken. We just want to ensure that there is such a robust process in place.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

A. FUREY: If the Member stops chirping, I am happy to answer, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: We want to ensure that there is a fair process in place; one that does not have an apprehension of bias, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: One that does not have an apprehension of bias, so the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can have a full and fulsome review of what happened, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we're in a sad state if you cannot entrust your Privacy Commissioner to do what is right for the people of this province in Newfoundland and Labrador who was appointed by that administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Speaker, the Privacy Commissioner was hired, in part, due to his extensive experience in health care. Now your government is arguing that he can't use that experience to do his job on behalf of the people of our province.

Premier, why are you blocking the Privacy Commissioner from doing his job?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member for pointing out that the Privacy Commissioner's extensive background and history in the Department of Health –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

If it continues, Members will be named and they will lose their speaking privileges.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: It is because of the Privacy Commissioner's previous background as a member of the board of NLCHI and assistant deputy minister in the Department of Health that the scope of some of his questions relate to his previous role and that, by definition, creates a possible reasonable apprehension of bias that an objective person, a reasonable person in this province might see that.

It doesn't mean that he does have a bias towards the situation, but we do have a duty to make sure that everything is done properly and fairly to ensure it's thorough and transparent for the public and that there is no bias in the situation. This investigation needs to happen and I can guarantee it will happen, but this is a part of the process that needs to take place first before any further questions are asked and before any bias creeps into the investigation.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, it's the first time in my 40 years as a civil servant that I've heard knowledge of a civil servant is a detriment to them being able to do their job, Mr. Speaker. That's an embarrassment.

Last year the former Health minister said that a 2020 cyberthreat assessment contained no red flags. Yet, the Privacy Commissioner has found that the document actually says significant IT vulnerabilities exist.

Why is the Liberal Government launching a cover-up?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I do want to address the preamble because this is a very important issue for the people of the province with regard to the investigation into the cyberattack, which I'll say again needs to happen and will happen. But first, a comment that knowledge is not a thing that should be valued in the public service.

Unfortunately, people that do have knowledge, that is what creates the conflict. I don't know if they've ever heard of something called a conflict of interest. When you're in a conflict of interest, you should remove or recuse yourself from the situation. Again, we look forward to the investigation being done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: I'm happy to stay here for the whole Question Period and answer the questions because it is important that we inform the other side about why this process is being taken. Another fact that they got wrong is the government is not suing the Privacy Commissioner. The government is just asking for the court on an objective ruling with regard to reasonable apprehension of bias in this situation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll remind the Minister of Justice, we are well aware what conflict of interest looks like, and we're waiting on –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – investigations as a matter of fact. So I think the government opposite are well aware we know what it's all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, last week in questioning, the minister dismissed concerns about the delayed pay grid for early childhood educators, saying operators had asked for more time. Speaker, operators have contradicted the minister's claims in the media.

I ask the minister: Will he stand and apologize to the operators he insulted last week?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Just to be sure, it is very, very important to this government and to me as Attorney

General that everybody understands the situation with regard to the court action being taken from the government and the Privacy Commissioner because facts do matter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I want everybody to understand why it's being taken and it is because there's a possible reasonable apprehension of bias that the Privacy Commissioner may have because of his previous dealings and his role as assistant deputy minister of Health and a board member of Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information. As the public knows, the cyberattack was into the Department of Health, it was into NLCHI, so it is important that the court clarifies that for us and for the public as a whole.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: A further insult to the operators who are waiting on an answer to my question, the minister decides to use his time to be on his soapbox.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I'll ask it again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: The same rules apply over there, Speaker.

SPEAKER: It does apply. Move on with your question, please.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, last week in questioning, the minister dismissed concerns about the delayed pay grid for

early childhood educators saying operators had asked for more time. Speaker, operators have contradicted the minister's claims in the media.

I ask the minister: Will he stand and apologize to the operators he insulted last week?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question, Speaker.

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to present here for the House a list of the meetings that the other lady who is discussing this with the Member opposite says never happened. These are the meetings. There were 11 under my predecessor going back to July of 2021. The most recent of these town halls requested by this individual was as recently as March 13.

This discussion about delaying payments was made in conjunction and at the insistence of the entire sector. Her business partner sits on the provincial committee that asked for it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I'm not sure what lady he says I'm talking to. I'm not talking to a lady about this. I'm really comfortable with my facts and they're well-placed people as well. I guess we can compare notes all day long but that's not productive, obviously. Whatever meetings they had, they're not working.

Speaker, operators feel – quote – confused and frustrated by the minister's claim that they had asked for more time. This is simply

not true according to multiple operators who spoke to the media.

Was the minister misinformed or did he misinform this House?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

There are three representative groups within the sector, each of whom is represented on the committee and how they choose to communicate with their members is not something that we can arbitrate upon.

That request I have in writing and I'm quite happy to bring those letters to the House to be tabled from other participants in the sector. They were adamant that they did not want to get involved in any one-off payments going back to the 1st of January. They wanted more time to get the wage grid sorted out.

There will be, for the benefit of ECEs across the province, an announcement coming in the very near future about the wage grid.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Stay tuned. We've been waiting for months and that's the promise, we'll wait and see.

Speaker, operators have indicated the new wage grid should've been done long ago. Now government is scrambling, as we heard just now from the minister. Operators said they never saw a plan.

Again, why is the minister blaming child care operators in this province for his failures?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We are the sixth jurisdiction – will be – to come out with a wage grid. We will be very competitive with those other jurisdictions. As I show here, there have been multiple meetings at every stage where we, as a government, have disclosed what we could.

But there were multiple town halls at the request of the operators to clarify questions. We answered them as we could, when we could. Happy to discuss it further, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: The minister needs to realize those meetings were not productive. That's what we're hearing. You can meet all day long, but if you're not going to bring anything to the table, it's a waste of time, Speaker.

Speaker, according to *The Telegram* story, as late as last week, government had a town hall, as he was just saying, with operators and asked – this is what they asked in this town hall, let's talk about meetings – how they felt it should work – two weeks ago. Speaker, we're less than two weeks from the proposed implementation date and the minister is still on the drawing board.

Will you convene an urgent meeting with the operators' association and apologize and convene something meaningful?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Again, multiple meetings, multiple discussions, quotations taken out of context from a town hall in a meeting mean very little, Mr. Speaker.

These individuals are valued representatives of valued groups within this province. There will be an announcement shortly about a wage grid, which will put ECEs in this province at the head of the pack, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll once again say it's disrespectful – it's totally disrespectful – to this full operation, all the child care operators in the province. It's total disrespect.

Speaker, the only wage grid details operators were given is \$25 an hour for Level II ECEs. Minister, Level II ECEs already make more than that.

Speaker, is the minister's solution to the child care crisis to insult operators and actually pay its staff less?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Payment for ECEs has been a patchwork quilt of hourly rates, which are paid through the Operating Grant Program as well as top-ups. Come the wage grid, there will be a unified single payment to the operators to be given along to the employees as a salary, which is pensionable, taxable, whatever, depending on the circumstances of their employment.

The facts of the case are that no one will actually make less under the new system

than they do on the current one, and a lot will make a lot more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, there was a serious incident Friday in Mount Pearl when a school bus had a catastrophic mechanical failure resulting in injuries to students on the bus. One student had to be taken to hospital.

I ask the minister responsible for Service NL: Has this bus been seized as part of the investigation?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

School bus safety is incredibly important; something that our highway enforcement officers always prioritize is school bus inspections. All school buses are inspected before the beginning of the school year and then we have a rotation of inspections. The bus in particular in question was inspected last summer and then they had another inspection submitted to us as late as January of this year.

At the moment, our highway enforcement officers are working very closely with the RNC to do an investigation on this very important – we need to resolve this important issue.

Our thoughts and well wishes go to the families. Obviously, whenever children are on a school bus and there's an incident, it's all hands on deck to make sure that this doesn't happen again.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: The question was: Was the bus in particular seized? We need to know that, Speaker. The rear axle almost came fully off the bus for something that was inspected in January, that's very unusual. We're lucky this isn't a much more serious incident.

I ask the minister: When was the last time her department inspected this bus? Will she table that report, and was the other bus seized?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm very pleased to announce that all of our school bus inspection reports are on our website. Anyone in the public can view them at anytime.

Our highway enforcement officers did inspect that bus in the summer before school started and, in particular, that school bus in question was inspected by an official inspection station in January of this year and that report was sent to us. If it hasn't already made its way to the website, it will be imminently, Speaker.

In terms of the bus, it is not in operation at the moment obviously, as there is an active investigation by the RNC and our highway enforcement officers are assisting with that.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

I mean, an axle coming off a bus that was inspected in January, there's something

wrong. There's obviously something wrong and all of our kids deserve better than that.

Speaker, the safety of the students travelling to school must be paramount.

Has the minister ordered a complete inspection of contracted busing in the province after this incident?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

School bus safety is incredibly important. All our school bus inspection reports are on our website, anyone can have a look at them. We inspect 100 per cent of the fleet before school starts in September and then we have a rotation where we periodically do 20 per cent, 30 per cent of all school buses throughout the year.

In this particular instance, our highway enforcement officers did a visual inspection before the school year and then in this particular bus also they had an inspection done by one of our official inspection stations. That report was sent to our office.

Obviously, whenever there's a school bus incident, it's taken very seriously. The RNC are leading this investigation which our highway enforcement officers are fully participating in.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Obviously, what's been working hasn't been working. Whatever the department has been doing hasn't been working. Because if that was inspected in January for an axle to

come off and students to get hurt, there's something not right there.

What has the department done since this accident to ensure that this does not happen again in the near future?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to reiterate that we take school bus safety and the safety of children on school buses is paramount. I cannot stress that enough.

This investigation is being led by the RNC, which our highway enforcement officers are fully participating in. There was an inspection done of this bus by an official inspection station and that report was sent to us in January of this year. I encourage anyone of the public; our bus inspection reports are available online.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, according to Dr. Janine Hubbard, the vacancy rate for psychologists throughout our province is over 50 per cent.

I ask the minister: How can we ensure the people of our province get the mental health care they need with a 50 per cent vacancy rate for psychologists?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've had good discussions with Janine Hubbard, Mr. Speaker, and with the association. We've put a market adjustment in place to retain the clinical psychologists

we have in the province. We are focused on recruitment as well. They are part of the group that we're looking at with Come Home benefits.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we're in a globally competitive environment for recruitment, but it is an essential service to the people of this province and we are determined to recruit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

With psychologist vacancy rates over 50 per cent in all of our health authorities, access to mental health care in our province continues to suffer and, in particular, lack of long-term continuity of care. This government has been in power for almost eight years.

I ask the minister: Why does access to long-term mental health care continue to get worse on your watch?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the market adjustment that we've put in place for clinical psychologists was really just recently. Many of the individuals had left the health authority positions to go private because of pay. It was not just pay; some of the discussions that we've had with the association were around other issues within the work environment. Government is working to address those as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's amazing, after eight years, they're only recently now putting in market adjustments. It was reported this weekend that four psychiatrists in the Western Health region left the province last year. Western Health sent a letter to patients telling them they are unable to provide follow-up appointments or medication refills for those without a family doctor.

I ask the minister: What are people without a family doctor supposed to do?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, obviously, that is not an ideal situation with the letter that had gone out. I believe Western Health had addressed that letter as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are focused on recruitment. You look at the initiative we put in place just last week, Mr. Speaker, for example, in Bonavista, to recruit doctors to Bonavista. That has been successful. We have two full-time and one half-time position in Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: They are still recruiting in Bonavista.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, they've already started recruiting, now, under that same initiative for New-Wes-Valley. Next week, they'll start recruiting for Baie Verte. Then once we're able to recruit to those locations, we'll announce other locations that are in need of recruitment as well. But it is something that this province is focused on, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that people have the physicians (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you.

Let's bring the focus back to mental health here. The letter also suggested that patients should consider private options available in the community versus the public system.

I ask the minister: Is this an admission that this Liberal government has failed patients that require long-term continuity of care?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The reason I addressed the family doctors is that was the question: What would people do without a family doctor?

Mr. Speaker, continuity of care is important. We've put a number of initiatives in place in terms of mental health in this province, Mr. Speaker, including long-term mental health. Whether it's Bridge the gapp, opioid treatment, or the Assertive Community teams that we have in place, Doorways, the Mobile Crisis Response units, Strongest Families Institute. In fact, *Towards Recovery*, 54 of the recommendations now are substantially complete, Mr. Speaker.

Do we need more psychologists in the province? Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, we're working on that as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Mr. Speaker, the family of an 82-year-old woman is speaking out after another horrible incident at a long-term care centre in our province. The son is raising concern about a lack of attention to the injuries his mother suffered in the immediate aftermath, saying it took days to assess the scale of the injuries.

I ask the minister: Why did it take so long to help this woman?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, our thoughts certainly go out to the individual, to the family. As I'd indicated last week, obviously, the first priority is the individual as well as the family. Mr. Speaker, if it has taken that long, that is something that we can certainly look into.

I can't get into specific issues of a specific individual on the floor of the Legislature, as the Member knows, but I am certainly happy to meet with him and to try and do the best we can for that individual and for their family, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Fonemed is advising people who call the 811 HealthLine to see a family doctor; ironic considering that many of the people calling 811, I suspect, are doing so because they do not have a family doctor in the first place.

I ask the minister if he is able to tell us if Fonemed is also directing people to call Patient Connect NL if they do not have a family doctor and, if not, will he be directing them to do so.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we have sent correspondence to Fonemed to ask that they look at their referral recommendations. We also understand from Fonemed that those who are referred to a nurse practitioner within Fonemed, there is less than 1 per cent of those that are referred

then to either an emergency department or a family doctor. I also understand Fonemed is focused on recruiting additional nurse practitioners to ensure that individuals don't have to be referred outside of the Fonemed system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This retention question comes from a family doctor deeply concerned about the fate of their family practice and their patients. Family physicians are leaving their practices at an alarming rate; the loss of one physician can destabilize an entire medical practice, making it vulnerable to closure.

The question she has for the minister is: How do you plan to support the existing family practices in Newfoundland and Labrador in providing essential health services to the people of our province?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for his question because it is a good question.

The answer to that, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have eight Family Care Teams in the province today. We've just announced today an additional 10 Family Care Teams, Mr. Speaker, to assist with individuals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we have a virtual care public tender that is under review that will provide virtual care to any patient in the province who is not attached to a family physician. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have put incentive on top of incentive in place in this province to attract family physicians and

other health professionals to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The federal government is on its way to introduce anti-replacement worker legislation in workplaces that are under the federal jurisdiction.

I ask the Minister Responsible for Labour, when will he table this province's anti-replacement worker legislation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

As the Member knows, as minister of Labour it's a very fine line between balancing the rights of the workers as well as the ability for the employers to maintain their ability to keep employment in the province. We're continuing to work with our federal colleagues.

I'm at a FTP, I think – a federal-provincial-territorial meeting – in the next month to discuss this very issue with the federal minister.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

With the announcement of new Family Care Teams today, we have to be concerned these teams could take doctors from rural care centres. We witnessed this happen at Whitbourne. They told us they lost two of their emergency room doctors to collaborative clinics and to locums.

I ask the Minister of Health and Community Services: What steps are you taking to prevent this from happening to other rural health care centres?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It does give an opportunity to highlight that just yesterday we announced the rural retention bonus for family physicians in this province. Mr. Speaker, on top of that, we've announced the \$25,000 retention bonus for individuals in the province. On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we announced just last week \$200,000 to attract to the Category B sites throughout the province.

We've already seen success with that. We will continue to expand on the number of sites as we see success with other sites in the province.

Recruitment and retention is one of our top priorities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, my last question was about retention, not recruitment. So I'll follow up with this again from the family doctor.

According to the family doctor I spoke to, it can cost them up to \$60,000 just to set up a practice and up to \$50,000 or more annually just to cover administrative, clerical, insurance and other costs.

If a doctor decides to leave a practice, it not only orphans the patients but increases the patient and financial burden on the other doctors in the practice and potentially creates a domino effect of other doctors leaving.

I ask the Premier: What financial assistance and supports will his government put in place to help current – current – family doctors and family physicians maintain their practices and remain open? Not to recruit, but what will we put in place to help the current family practices?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question.

What we will do for current family practice doctors, Mr. Speaker, is what we announced last week which is a \$25,000 retention bonus –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: – straight to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Sir, you asked about a retention bonus. That is a retention bonus. Your question was directly about retention. This is \$25,000 for retention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The time for Question Period has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m., today, Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Member's Day on Wednesday, March 22, 2023, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall then adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m., on Monday, April 3, 2023.

SPEAKER: Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Just to inject some accuracy in one of my statements earlier from Question Period. The Member on the early child care advisory committee is in actual fact the association partner of the lady who is generating correspondence with the Member from Conception Bay South, not

the business partner. I didn't want there to be any confusion.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Approximately 100,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador live with mental illness. Only about 40 per cent of the people affected by mental illness and addiction seek help. Seventy per cent of mental illness develops during childhood and adolescence and most go undiagnosed. Even more troubling, less than 20 per cent receive appropriate treatment.

Emergency and short-term care isn't enough and it is essential more long-term treatment options are readily available.

Therefore, we petition this hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide access to long-term mental health care that ensures continuity of care beginning with psychiatric and neuropsychological assessments being more accessible to the public so they can access proper mental health treatment and supports on a regular and continuous basis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The level of conversation is getting too loud. I can't hear the Member's petition.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I think it was just this past Monday, we saw the – we have a young lady who's out here, who's been advocating for long-term mental health supports on a weekly basis. I think it was week 120. When we talk to or whenever we raise questions on this, we get a lovely list of all the short-term measures that are in place.

In talking to the association for psychologists of Newfoundland and Labrador, they will agree that those measures provide great quick and early access, but they do not provide intensive, long-term, evidenced-based therapies needed by many and typically provided by psychologists. They go on to say that they want to ensure psychologists who are in schools are involved in the interpretation and diagnosis of assessments.

As I said earlier, 70 per cent of mental health problems begin in childhood and adolescence. Individuals out there cannot afford to be waiting for some continuity of care for long-term supports. The piecemeal band-aid approach of going in and getting the immediate care first off is fine, but you cannot just send them away without a plan of care for them so that they can address their mental health care issues and be contributing members of society.

This is the main issue here. The main issue brought forward by many of these mental health advocacy groups is around long-term continuity of care. I'm hoping that this budget is going to have something in it to address this because our mental health has gotten a ton worse since COVID and it hasn't gotten better so we need to address this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, this petition is a request to provide affordable access to insulin to all who require it. The reason for the petition:

Diabetes is a widespread and potentially debilitating condition. Neglecting to address the growing issue will reflect a much more costly, deadly outcome on the behalf of taxpayers. Insulin was intended to be supplied to all people as a life-saving Canadian invention, as it was intended to be provided at little or no cost. This is not the reality for many who struggle with diabetes; and

WHEREAS 34 per cent of people in Newfoundland and Labrador are diabetic or pre-diabetic, with a projected increase to 38 per cent by 2030; and

WHEREAS diabetes is the reason for an alarming percentage of heart disease, stroke and dialysis due to kidney failure, blindness and amputation; and

WHEREAS diabetic medications are far too expensive for many diabetics to afford. Many don't qualify for insurance, don't receive health benefits at work or lost insulin coverage from their benefits for various reasons; and

WHEREAS Banting, Best and Collip, the trio who isolated insulin, sold their patent to the University of Toronto for \$1 each because they wanted everyone who needed access to insulin to have it.

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure easy, reliable and affordable access to insulin for all residents suffering from diabetes, as insulin is a life therapy and life-saving medication.

It seems, Speaker, that in many cases here in my time as MHA, people looking to get

necessary medication, whether it's to maintain sight, it's a fight to get government to fund this, to fund those necessary medications.

It should be an easy equation to figure out that providing insulin to all those who need it is far cheaper than emergency room visits, operations, amputations, so on and so forth. Yet, I've had people reach out to me who either are doing without their insulin, reducing the amount or using expired prescriptions or medication. That is unacceptable.

But the other part of it is we have, in the income support, let's take a look at the other prevention piece. Thirty dollars in a pay period for food to assist with the diabetic supplement – inadequate. It comes down to as well, Speaker, about making sure that there's adequate provision for healthy food for a healthy diet and hopefully to stave off the effects of diabetes. It's very clear here; let's make this accessible to everyone and put in place the finances to ensure people have the food they need.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Many rural communities in the District of Bonavista with speed limits of 50 kilometres or less do not have driveways off the main road with 115-metre sightlines to meet the requirement for road access. Many of these properties have large amounts of land and new residents are unable to utilize existing or historical driveways/roadways. This regulation of 115-metre sightlines in existing rural communities is restrictive and detrimental to property sales and, thus, a hindrance to new property development.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to adjust its regulations within such rural communities to allow property development by granting road access to said properties.

We have a lot of things in rural Newfoundland that are working against people, developers. We find that we have a population that is dropping in rural Newfoundland. Here's a case of one regulation which is contributing to the drop in population in rural Newfoundland.

Early settlements in Newfoundland and Labrador were along the coastline. There were meandering roads that traversed the coastline in Newfoundland. Communities like Harcourt in Trinity Bay in my district, in Brooklyn, Bonavista Bay side, the same. In fact, of those two communities, I'm not sure if there are any more than a handful of driveways that currently exist that would meet the regulation of 115-metre sightlines both sides of the property.

So what happens? We've got residents in Newfoundland and Labrador whose families wish to come home, wish to sell properties in these communities and they're being denied access to the road. It is restrictive. It is an impediment. It affects rural Newfoundland greatly and I would say in the cases that we would have in most of the communities, in the District of Bonavista, they're straddled with land that they own, or they have purchased in time, that they cannot move or they cannot put a house on because they're not granted the access to move on.

What we would suggest relax that regulation in rural Newfoundland, and by relaxing it, we'll have a few more of the 90 or 100 that currently exist that don't meet the regulation but at least we could do something to alert those people who enter those communities that we have hidden driveways.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

E. LOVELESS: Just briefly responding to that, and the Member is right in terms of the challenges in rural parts of the province. He points out an issue that I'm willing to take a look at and I've already asked the staff that I'd like to sit down and have a discussion on that. It's not just my department, but it's also involves Crown Lands as well. Together we're willing to take a look at it and see if something can be done for many rural parts of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is for fairer electricity rates for Northern Labrador communities.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that fairer electricity rates be provided to residents in Northern Labrador communities.

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

For the first 1,000-kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents are charged the same rate as the neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region. However, above the ceiling of 1,000-kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents pay six times the rate of Lake Melville residents. Six times the rate, jumping up to 19 cents a kilowatt-hour. This

is the highest rate in the entire province, preventing most residents from being able to afford to heat their homes with electric heat. Low-income families and households that don't have the manpower to haul wood are the greatest impacted.

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

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the life block to 3,500-kilowatt hours when applying the Northern Strategic Plan subsidy rate for electricity bills to Northern Labrador residents.

Now, Speaker, we live in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We look at Muskrat Falls, hopefully, will come online. That's going to serve a great thing for our province to help transition and lower the greenhouse gas emissions. We look at Upper Churchill Falls, a huge contributor to the province. These are major hydroelectric projects. But, in my communities, we can't access that hydroelectric power is really what it is.

When you look at how people in the North Coast heat their homes, they can't afford to lose electricity. The rest of the province now have concerns about their costs, but they don't pay anywhere near 19 cents a kilowatt-hour. If the rest of the province had to do that, I'm sure we would hear cries from the House of Assembly again talking about people being frozen out of their homes and the struggles. But when the cost of stove oil went up to \$2.40 a litre, that really, really impacted the people in the North Coast.

So, Speaker, this petition is really important because people are struggling to heat their houses.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS affordable, reliable and safe child care is a necessary component of a functioning society, especially one that expects to reduce poverty, create employment, decrease out-migration and increase in-migration, all of which are essential for a growing economy; and

WHEREAS accessible child care is as much as vital and important for a growing economy and flourishing population;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary action to ensure that accessible child care is just as much available as it is affordable.

Speaker, this is a major issue from the perspective of women who are the ones who unequally bare the brunt of this issue. We need to look at what can be done immediately; we need immediate government intervention.

We know that child care right now in inaccessible. We've all heard the sad stories and the desperate calls and pleas from families and women who are ready to return to work but cannot. They are either on their maternity leave or they cannot return to their workplace after years of being

at home. Why not? Because they cannot get the child care spaces for their children.

I am hearing from my constituents in the District of Harbour Main who are desperate, who are devastated. They had plans to return to the workforce. We know that there are not only women in my district but across the province, there are hundreds of Newfoundlanders and Labradorian women who recently had children but are unable to return to work at the end of a maternity leave. They cannot do it. There are just no child care spaces available.

We've heard about the grids and all of these other measures that are going to be in place, but what is that doing right now to support the women that, essentially, are not going to be able to return to work, that are not going to have an income? They're not going to be able to support their children in these times where we know how the cost of living is. It is going to impact them desperately.

These women need a solution today so they can return to work today. So what is the immediate plan of action? What is happening now? What is being proposed at this time for the hundreds of women who are now forced to, in 2023, make a choice between returning to work and staying at home?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy, Bill 33, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy, Bill 33, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Technology to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy," carried. (Bill 33)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act Respecting the Amalgamation of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro-Electric Corporation and Nalcor Energy. (Bill 33)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 33 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Technology, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 and the Public Utilities Act, Bill 34, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 and the Public Utilities Act, Bill 34, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Technology to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 and the Public Utilities Act," carried. (Bill 34)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Electrical Power Control Act, 1994 and the Public Utilities Act. (Bill 34)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 34 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Given the House was unable to sit this past Friday, I'm asking for the consent of all Members to move a motion I gave notice of earlier in proceedings today.

SPEAKER: Is consent granted?

AN HON. MEMBER: Thursday.

SPEAKER: Thursday.

J. HOGAN: What did I say?

AN HON. MEMBER: Friday.

SPEAKER: We didn't sit Friday either.

J. HOGAN: Thursday.

AN HON. MEMBER: What are we giving consent to (inaudible)?

J. HOGAN: The notice of motion I read earlier today.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, but what is that?

SPEAKER: The motion is that we would sit late this evening.

Is consent granted?

AN HON. MEMBER: I don't care; I'll sit here all night.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under

Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m., today, Tuesday, March 21, 2023.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, resolution respecting the granting of Interim Supply to His Majesty and related Bill 21.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve into Committee of Supply?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 21, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the sum of \$2,974,162,700."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and to represent the great people of St. John's West yet again. We have now spent – I guess this is day three on Interim Supply. Interim Supply is required to be passed in the House of Assembly so that we can continue ongoing operations of government from the period of April 1, 2023, until June 30, 2023, or until the budget of 2023 and associated main Supply bill is being introduced, debated and approved by the Legislature.

Now, everyone in this Legislature does know and I know the people of the province know that we will be introducing our budget on Thursday, March 23, a couple of short days away from now. So what we are asking the House of Assembly, this is normal procedure so that we can continue the operations of government, that we have an allocation made. This is not incremental to the budget, this is instead simultaneous with the budget, that this legislation pass the House of Assembly and receive Royal Assent. We need it by tomorrow, March 22, to ensure the seamless, ongoing, continuous operations of government. It's no interruption to government, no interruption to payroll, no interruption to the services, the health care, the schools, anything at all, so that we can have a

seamless and continuous process and government in place while we debate the budget, which will be read – I think this is one of the earliest times ever – in March.

So March 23 is budget day. I look forward to standing in this House. This is my fourth budget standing in this House and bringing forward what this government's priorities are and how we intend to effectively manage the people's finances over the next year. The allocation for this Interim Supply is \$2,974,162,700, and that represents about 37 per cent of 2022-2023, so last year's budget, which is normal process for this House. It's both a budget of current in capital account and gross expenditures.

I'm hopeful – I've listened intently to debate with I think everyone saying that they are supportive of this Interim Supply. It would be highly unusual that they would not be supportive on Interim Supply as it continues operations while we debate the budget. I've been listening intently to some of the requests for this budget, which is coming up on Thursday, and some of the key issues faced by all colleagues in this House with regard to their districts and the requirements of same.

So, Chair, I implore the House to continue this discussion and debate to ensure that Interim Supply is granted as quickly as possible so that we can seamlessly continue operations. As we get into what I'm going to call the depth and discussion around budget 2023-2024 because, of course, that's when the Opposition, the Members of government get the chance to go line by line through the budget. Comb through budget; ask important questions in budget as to everything that's being spent.

Again, Interim Supply is not incremental to the budget. It is included in budget '23-'24. I find it hard to believe that we're already talking about a budget that ends in 2024, Chair. How quickly time passes. But again, this is an important Interim Supply and I'd ask all my colleagues to pass this Interim

Supply as quickly as possible so that we can move forward and ensure seamless operation of government.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

I want to take this opportunity, again, to thank the residents of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port who have sent me back to the House, the second time here, to speak on their behalf. Today, I will speak on a number of different topics that are all related to budget and the first one I'll start with is the issue around child care.

My hon. colleague, the critic for Education, from Conception Bay South, has spoken on this and asked several questions on this important issue for the last number of days. My colleague from Harbour Main District just presented a petition on this important issue. It's to the point where, I think, we on this side of the House have referred to it as a crisis. I truly believe that it is a crisis. The reason I say that is because of some of the information that was provided to me this past weekend.

I found out, this past weekend, that there are two specialists employed in the Western region who have not returned to work and they have stated to their employer that the reason they haven't returned to work is because of a lack of child care. Now, those are two specialists in the health care system. How many more health care professionals in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are out there now saying we cannot return to work because we don't have access to child care? So it has a significant impact on the delivery of health care in this province if we have health care professionals who are not

able to return to work because they don't have access to child care.

Now, that is not a good situation for this province to be in and it is something that needs to be addressed immediately and it's something that has to be fixed immediately. Today, the government talked a lot about truth and some of the things that were happening in the daycare system. I'd also like to return the attention to some of the comments made by the Justice Minister when he talked about the idea that they're now suing their own Privacy Commissioner

—

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

T. WAKEHAM: Excuse me; the report says that they're being sued to halt the Privacy Commissioner cyberattack investigation, citing bias. That was what was reported in the news. So that indicates that government has determined, in its own mind, that the Privacy Commissioner has a bias.

Are they afraid of what the Privacy Commissioner might find? Is that the reason why you would take a court action? I understand they talk about conflict of interest and they seem to be hiding behind that. I'd be more interested in finding out the facts and if the Privacy Commissioner can do that, then he ought to be able to do it.

But what's more important to me is, I think about a government suing its own Privacy Commissioner and I'm wondering how much is that going to cost. How much will that cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador for this to actually happen? Would not that money be better spent on providing services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Maybe a senior who needs some help paying their food bill, or filling their tank with oil. How much money are we going to go and spend to try and keep the Privacy Commissioner from doing an investigation? I don't think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will consider that to be a wise investment of

money. We've often heard it's all about choices and that's what's happening here. It's a choice to take this action against the Privacy Commissioner.

And think about the secretness of that. Think about where this government is going when it comes to some of the things it's done in the past. I would argue that it's almost like we have the secret society of the Liberal government, and it's time for that to stop. This is the taxpayers' money. This is the House of Assembly. This is where we should have access to information.

We just found out again that another contract has been let with the Rothschild to do another report. We have a \$5-million report that none of us are allowed to see, unless you're a Member of the secret society of the Liberal government. The rest of us have no reason, the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are not allowed to know what's in it.

Will this second Rothschild report be the same thing? Are we to sit here and simply say, oh, good job, good job because we're not allowed to know what's in those reports. That to me is not good.

Some time ago, last year, as a matter of fact, on March 21, the government signed a contract, or the four health authorities on behalf of the government signed a contract with a company called Change Healthcare Canada. That contract was going to look at how we might change the scheduling system. It was an opportunity to look at finding savings in the health care system. The more savings the company found, the more money they made. They were paid \$3 million at the beginning of this contract.

I ask Members or the government opposite how much money has been paid to this company to date called Change Healthcare Canada? What happened to that big announcement? What happened to that particular company and the direction that was going to be taken when it comes to

scheduling? We have no idea on this side of the House what has happened to that particular contract. Again, \$3 million to start, upwards of \$35 million, potentially, to be paid out and we're sitting here today with no idea of how much money has been paid or will continue to be paid.

Last week, the Premier said, and he used the words: what is true. Well, I can tell you what is true. It's true that people of Newfoundland and Labrador are continuing to have to pay to see a primary health care provider, because in my district they pay \$35 a visit and others they pay up to \$65 a visit. What is true? We have long-term care beds closed. What is true? We have acute-care beds filled with long-term care patients because long-term care beds are closed. What is true? People are waiting months and years to see a specialist. What is true? The health care system under this government has deteriorated and it is in the worst shape it has been in the history of the province. That is true. That is true.

It cannot be simply blamed on the pandemic because the Nurses' Union and NAPE both argued prior to the pandemic back in 2015 that we needed a staffing review. They all put it forward. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association told government that there would be a problem with the recruitment and retention of physicians, but the minister of the day paid no attention. As a result of that, we now find ourselves in a situation where we're playing catch up. That is the problem; that is the real problem here. We have not had any real direction going forward since 2015 and now we find ourselves having to find solutions.

While I applaud the current minister for some of the actions he has taken, they are going to create a problem because they are turning around and competing one section of the province against another; one town against another. This is what is happening right now.

In my district this weekend, a family physician said to me: Perhaps I'll go and move to Bonavista because I can get \$200,000 if I go to Bonavista for two years. That's going to take a physician out of Stephenville. How does that solve the health care problem? It just moves the pieces around. So we have to come up with that plan.

My colleague, the critic for the Department of Health, has said on several occasions: Where's the plan? Today, I stand here and ask the same question: Where's the plan?

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

It is always a great opportunity when you can get up here and speak. We're talking about Interim Supply. We know this is a part of the normal procedure just to ensure that there is continuity to the government's operations until we get to budget day. As the Minister of Finance noted, the budget will give an indication of what government's priorities are.

I do hope that government has been listening. We have brought solutions forward; we have brought recommendations forward; we have brought opinions forward. As the Opposition, we have done our best to ensure that the concerns of residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are brought to this House.

So I do look forward to the budget; I commend the minister on her fourth budget. I don't know if it gets any easier but a lot of the applause goes to those behind the scenes, the staff that do a tremendous amount of work to prepare the documents and do all the number crunching to put

together what we're going to hear on this coming Thursday.

I do want to, again, say a thank you to my residents out in Topsail - Paradise for putting their faith in me and I continue to bring their concerns forward.

In Topsail - Paradise, what a wonderful district. It's a relatively young district, lots of families, lots of professionals and also a very good seniors' population. Some of the concerns for my district, outside of the health care ones that I hear on a regular basis, but there are some key issues that we'd like to see or hope to see when the budget comes down. Some acknowledgement towards a high school for Paradise.

(Technical difficulties.)

P. DINN: I said something wrong. I got struck by lightning.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's coming.

P. DINN: Yes, that's going to happen.

Anyway, it sounded like thunder, but back to the schools. In my district, of course, a big ask is around a high school for the area. As I stated in the past, this was a promise back in 2015 when the previous PC government looked at an intermediate school as well as a review for a high school. Of course, we know the intermediate school was delayed a couple of years, but it is there and functioning. The review for a high school was indefinitely shelved. So, hopefully, we'll have some greater discussion on that and we'll see something in the budget that will look at a high school or a review for a high school in the district.

Roads have always been an issue. Route 60, and I know the minister, we've had a number of conversations on this. I know municipal staff and his staff are working on a solution around Route 60. It still doesn't address the craters that we approach on a

regular basis. I do understand the weather certainly has an influence on that, but Route 60 through Topsail is a highly travelled road with lots of traffic. I walk it on a regular basis and I'm telling you it's a wonder I haven't been hit yet because there are sections on that road where walking is really taking your life in your hands.

Child care: with such a young community I have in or around my district there are multiple schools, K-to-5 schools. There are at least, I believe, four K to 5, one K to 4. There are two intermediate schools and a high school close by. So you can imagine the number of children in the community. As I noted earlier, I also have a very professional working population as well. Like my colleague mentioned earlier, we have individuals who, literally, can't go to work because they have to stay home. I don't say have to in that sense, but I mean, you're going to stay home to look after your children. But they don't have the choice. They don't have the choice to get proper child care or daycare for their children and be able to pursue their career and their professional development.

That affects mainly women. You do have some stay-at-home fathers who stay at home with their children, but it does mainly affect women. It's good to come in and offer \$10-a-day daycare, but if there are no seats, it's not available or it's not accessible, then it really doesn't address the situation. In fact, many have told me that has made the situation worse because it has eliminated a lot of seats that individuals would normally have their children in. To think that parents, some before they're even pregnant, for a family who is expecting, are searching for child care and putting their name on a list where they could be accepted on a list. Not all can.

To put that in perspective, for a province that is dealing with population concerns, think about it. We could be increasing our population if we had the availability of the resources there and the facilities there.

When a young family are deciding should I have one child, should I have two, based on the availability of child care, that's shameful to me. That's shameful for a province that is so desperate for an increase in population. Yes, you're going to bring in immigrants; we need them, no debate. They bring in their culture, they bring in their expertise and they bring in their families.

But our child care dilemma that we're in now really needs to be affixed to that. There has to be something done. You're not just balancing. You're looking at regulated child care, but then you also have unregulated. What are we doing across the board to ensure that there are child care seats available because all we're doing now is we're having less and less people in the workforce, pulling out.

I guess related to that – that is all across this province and it's no different in my district – is the cost of living. I gave an example in this House before where I walked into a local supermarket to pick up one of those single-serve salads for one of my daughters to take to work and it was mainly lettuce and, as I said, it was \$8 or \$9. It was amazing. So hopefully, through the budget, we're going to see some measures put in place either taking away taxes or adding some other incentives to allow people to be able to survive so they're not making those decisions between heat, food or medication. If you're offering these cost-of-living incentives, maybe you need to look at where it's going to be most effective then across the board for everyone. I'm hoping that we'll see some measures and initiatives put in there.

I know my time is running short, but I also mentioned about my great seniors population in Topsail - Paradise, very active population in Paradise, the 50-plus clubs. It is without a doubt heartbreaking when you think about families who either have their parent or grandparent in long-term care or home care, but then there are those who cannot find long-term care or home care for

them. I know of many families dealing with elders who are suffering from dementia and you're struggling to find a place for them or you're struggling to have supports around to look after them. Much more needs to be done there as well.

When you look at balancing out, on one end, our youth, our children and that, we need work done there. We need government to stand up and make sure child care is available on that end; but then on the end-of-life end of the pendulum, we have to have similar concerns or to look after our seniors, to address them with dignity, respect and autonomy and have them live out their final years in a respectful manner, we need to start addressing that sooner than later as well.

I'll have more to say later.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

Further speakers to the bill?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to stand again and have a few words on behalf of the concerns that are raised by the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, Mr. Chair.

I just want to bring up one small thing. I have to recognize the minister responsible for Housing on that funding announcement for Corner Brook for the emergency shelter. I know it was brought to your attention and you reviewed it quickly and got the money approved. I just want to recognize that, Minister. Thanks for doing that because it's great need and thanks for acting so swiftly on that to get that work done. It's much needed and thank you for your swift action

on that for the people that's vulnerable in the Corner Brook area. I want to recognize that.

I'm going to speak today on the new family care announced for Newfoundland and Labrador: new Family Care Teams. Once again, I'm not saying anything about the ones that were given, absolutely not. As we said, health care is in a crisis, absolutely no doubt. Did you notice that based on a needs assessment, here's what was given out in Bonavista, Broomfield, Centreville, Clarenville, Conception Bay South, Deer Lake, White Bay, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Labrador West, Port aux Basques and St. John's, and none for Corner Brook? It's almost like, for some reason, Corner Brook feels that everything is good. It's not good. Then when you look at it, based on a needs assessment and available resources.

So I ask the government: Table the report, the needs assessment, why Corner Brook was left out and Bay of Islands. I look at the Member for Corner Brook, he's getting calls. The Member for St. George's - Humber, you tell me that there's no one in your district that would use this here without a family doctor? None for that area? As we look at it in this area, none from, say, Pasadena right out to Stephenville and in between that area where the Member is getting calls, and I know he's getting calls because they're calling our office also. Yet, we don't know what the needs assessment was and all I know is that it's being left out again.

The number of calls that we get – and I know the Member for Corner Brook is getting them, the Member for St. George's - Humber is getting the same calls where people can't get a family physician, can't get the prescriptions filled, cannot get their driver's licence renewed and here we are being left out again. So I just get to the point where okay, if I've got to raise the concerns on behalf of the Member for St. George's - Humber and the Member for Corner Brook, I'll do it. I'll definitely do it.

But I can tell you, there is some reason it's being left out. I don't know the reason why because once they say well, there's a needs assessment but we can't look at the needs assessment because, oh, that's confidential. That's confidential for some reason.

I can tell you a person – and I won't name the people. They gave a lot to the foundation in Corner Brook – a lot – and they were part of it a lot. His wife went to the emergency for 14 hours; do you know what happened? She left. Came back the next night and on the 14th hour the next day, they brought her in; 28 hours, brought her in right away. Do you know what they needed? Do you know what this person needed for his wife? They needed a referral to go up to a place in Ontario for cancer. That's what they needed – 28 hours they had to do it.

Here we are again putting out these Family Care Teams and none for that area. So people now phone this 811, 90 per cent even longer is going to say, well, b'y, if you feel like this, go on to emergency. Off they go to the emergency department and again, for whatever reason, the area out on the West Coast is left out again.

The minister may have great justification for that, I don't know, because once they use these words, the need, the assessment need, no one can ever evaluate if it's true, if it's not true. I know when the minister said the other said well, there are only 35,000 people without doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador. I question that. I honestly question that.

I make no bones about it, I question that, because I know the amount of calls that we get. I know the amount of people who are looking for it. I even just met people here today, here in St. John's, just in this building today, haven't got a doctor. Haven't got a doctor, yet they're saying, well, it's not as many as you think. Well, I think there are.

So I just wanted to bring that up, Mr. Chair, because once again it's something that's

put out there and I'm not saying anything that they shouldn't be done in these areas. I'm definitely not criticizing it for being done in these areas, but I'm saying there's a need in Western Newfoundland for some kind of care because, right now, people haven't got the doctors. People are trying to use the nurse practitioners. Mr. Chair, with the nurse practitioners, people have to pay out of their own pocket.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to read a letter given to me by a nurse practitioner and, of course, people always read the letters from people, I'm going to read the letter. I'm going to read it in its entirety, the letter itself.

Given the current state of our health care system and the government having reached out to other parts of the world for help, can this government explain the 130,000-plus taxpayers of Newfoundland without a primary care provider, why they haven't reached out to the nurse practitioners of this province to open independent clinics if they so wish and have those nurse practitioners compensated using the publicly funded health care system as currently providers do?

Nurse practitioners are highly educated and subsequently highly skilled. They work independently, can prescribe medication, order and interpret tests and provide comprehensive, primary health care as proven in the hospitals and clinics under regional health care facilities.

There are private nurse practitioner clinics on this Island. However, the taxpayer who need to visit them has to pay out of pocket for their care, having already paid to help fund the system we already have. Why can't the nurse practitioners be compensated as current providers are so some of the 130,000 people who have no provider at present get the care needed at no extra cost to them?

If nurse practitioners are not utilized this way in other provinces, why can't

Newfoundland be precedent setting, be innovative in this area and not just following the status quo? We can have publicly funded health care for all if nurse practitioners are utilized this way.

Health care is in a crisis. Overworked, booked to capacity, 130,000 Newfoundlanders without primary care; nurse practitioners are the answer.

Mr. Chair, here's my concern about the government, we're always talking about we've got to utilize all the workers to their potential. Here's an opportunity by nurse practitioners, and I know there are three in Corner Brook now, but the people that go, a lot of them are seniors, a lot of them are, a lot of them aren't, but they call the office and I know they're calling other Members from the West Coast also, and say: Why do we have to pay \$60? Why have we got to pay \$65? They walk in just to get a yearly prescription and they've got to pay \$65. Just to walk in, here's a prescription, \$65. They've got to get a letter to be able to continue on with their licence. They walk in. Get it done. They've got to pay for it. There's something wrong.

There has yet to be an explanation why we can't use the nurse practitioners to their capacity to help out people in Newfoundland. I just haven't got one yet – haven't got one. We can't say well, we can't because of MCP. All we've got to do, Mr. Chair, is hire those people, hire the nurse practitioners, even if it's through Western Health, and set them up in the office. We heard today the minister talking about retention, say, for offices, putting out \$25,000. Do it for the nurse practitioner. See how quickly you'll get a nurse practitioner there. See how quickly you can get another 2,000 or 3,000 people with a doctor; get four or five like that.

So we'll do it for doctors which is fine. We'll do it for doctors, yet the nurse practitioners you could do the same thing. Set them up, hire them through Western Health and say

now, let's go out now and try to help with the overload in the emergency department.

Mr. Chair, there are ways. The government's already saying, well, we're looking for new, innovative ways. This is something that's right on your desk; you just need the will to do it.

I see my time is getting short, Mr. Chair, and I thank you again for the opportunity.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Chair.

Interim Supply is here again I guess. Everybody's excited to see what's in the new budget. I'm sure there are going to be good things in the new budget. I'm sure there are going to be surprising things. I personally am hoping – and I'll go on record now – that there's going to be some operational money for the Lionel Kelland Hospice.

The Lionel Kelland Hospice has been funded so far somewhat by the provincial government, which we are very thankful for that. But the majority of the monies to open it and operate it will be coming from the community and the fine, fine fundraising team that we have for the Lionel Kelland Hospice right now.

I believe their quote is: Every moment matters. Which is something we can all take in life. As we near the end, everybody wants a dignified death. My heart right now is with my CA and her dad who is in hospital right now and possibly facing the end.

I've seen it throughout hospitals in Central Newfoundland and Labrador where people have died on gurneys, in hallways, zero respect, sat there, laid there for days. It's no way for a family to come together.

Fortunately, we have the first community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador; it will be in Grand Falls-Windsor. We're still looking at a date of June for an opening. It will take pressure off the health care system that we currently have. It will be cheaper. The beds will be cheaper than housing somebody as they face the end of their life. Most importantly, it'll give the family a place to come to gather for closure to say goodbye to their loved one and, of course, it'll give the loved one the respect and dignity that they should have as they pass on.

I'm going to be asking questions about it after budget day, but I'm really hoping that there's something there for operational costs when it comes to the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor. It would be a shame to see this open and not being able to operate the way that it should. It serves so many people throughout Central. I'm sure it will serve people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm just hoping that we can make our first community hospice in Newfoundland and Labrador a successful one. Of course, it's going to take dollars to do it, but there's no reason why those dollars can't go to the Lionel Kelland Hospice this budget time, because it will be opening in June.

Something else that is very important to myself and my constituents and lots of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is something that myself and many of my colleagues have been asking about for quite some time now since I've been elected and that is a community benefits agreement. We see a community benefits agreement across the country, across many other provinces and it truly benefits the community when a new project comes in.

In Grand Falls-Windsor, Buchans, Millertown and Badger we now have Marathon Gold, which has a 13-year mine life. We're looking at probably up around three million ounces of gold. We are very

fortunate to have Marathon Gold; they have been extremely generous before they even put a shovel in the ground. They even gave I think it was \$250,000 to the Lionel Kelland Hospice for operational costs down the road.

As Marathon Gold comes in, as other companies come in, we're excited and we want them to succeed because when they succeed, we succeed as a province. But we should have a more established community benefits agreement that would lock in those jobs for the locals here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The community supports, I know many provinces across Canada whenever a big company comes in and does this, it is great for the community and you get to see a lot of spinoffs.

One of the biggest things that concerns myself would be the infrastructure. As these big companies come in to these smaller communities, it is well known, obviously, we need to get big equipment in there, lots of loads need to come in and out of these places and it does a number on the roads. It certainly does.

I am fortunate in my district right now; I have had the east side of the Trans-Canada Highway done in Grand Falls-Windsor, the west side and two or three substantial bridges in between there. The Buchans Highway right now and into Millertown and as they make their way down through for this mine, that road is really being tore up. It is certainly getting a kicking and there needs to be some responsibility for that. The people of these towns who use these roads every single day, their kids are on the roads and we have school buses on the roads, ambulances on those roads, we need to ensure that those roads are intact and there needs to be a responsibility for that. It can be a shared responsibility throughout communities, throughout government, through the companies that come in, that we are so fortunate to have. But until a community benefits agreement is

concrete, intact, this is going to be ignored. It is.

There needs to be some sort of responsibility for the roads and the infrastructure as it gets a beating for these projects. It's not the town's fault. The town shouldn't have to worry about a road that have serviced them for 40 or 50 years that have done them well. But now, of course, circumstances have changed and I believe if we had a good community benefits agreement, it would be addressed and these towns could worry a lot less about potholes or the side of the road being tore up or sinkholes.

That's what's happening up on the Buchans Highway now, and I didn't see it in the Roads Plan for this year, but I would encourage the government to take a look at a community benefits agreement that would set in stone some sort of calculation where everybody can pitch in and ensure that the residents of these small towns can not only get jobs, but can maintain the infrastructure that they've maintained throughout the years. Whether they're an LSD, a town or community, they managed to maintain it with government and I believe that the roads and the infrastructure should be maintained as well and it can be done through a community benefits agreement.

I would urge government to keep working on that. It will be a living, breathing document. I would love to be a part of it. I've worked with many companies that have implemented community benefits agreements and, of course, the trade unions and Trades NL would be the same. So I would encourage government to please take a look at that as we move forward.

Agricultural land: I just had two neighbours basically in Badger who had their agricultural lots reposessed, I guess, by government. The reasons for this are multi-fold, but they were never asked why they didn't bear fruit or plant anything over the past two years since COVID. I know the

government constantly talks about how COVID has affected things, day-to-day activities here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, it's affected everybody and that includes these two farmers in Badger who now have no land to farm on, even though they farmed on it for probably the past 40 years, they have a homestead there and now they're being told that everything needs to come off it, and that's just not fair. That's not fair at all. I mean my last calculation, we grow less than 8 per cent of the food in our province. That's not good enough. We need every little bit that we can.

So within these small communities like Badger if somebody plants a potato field and they're up to the market every Sunday selling their potatoes, their carrots, their vegetables or their livestock, then by God that's something that we need to get behind and cut out the red tape. Basically, these two gentlemen were just sent letters saying nothing has been growing there for the past two years; we're taking it back. Everything needs to be removed in 90 days. That's terrible.

These two gentlemen are older. They've been there for such a long time. They've grown stuff for 40 years. Well, the past two or three years, it's been rough on government; we understand that. It's been rough on the people of the province, too. So a little bit of leeway would be appreciated. Maybe a phone call to ask them why. I mean, one gentleman, his daughter has cancer, he had a heart attack and his wife had medical issues as well during the past two years with COVID and not one phone call to these gentlemen were made – not one. It was just a letter saying get your stuff off the land; we're taking it back. That's not fair. If we can use this land to grow stuff, absolutely, it should be done every single time.

Mr. Chair, I'll just leave off on mental health. My colleague said today that one in five people – I would guess that's even higher

because that's one in five people that come out and say that they suffer from mental illness but lots of people suffer in silence. But, again, my office is open. I'm hoping that all 40 Members are in tune with anybody who might need mental health as well.

We have all the services, we have the connections and we can help you. So please, reach out to my district office in Grand Falls-Windsor. We will be there to help you and I hope that every Member is the same way. If your mental health isn't good, you cannot get through day-to-day activities, it takes a toll on your family, it takes a toll on your community and we just have to do better.

So with that, I'll take my seat.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wasn't planning on speaking to this issue I'm going to bring up because it was an issue that I thought we had solved some two years ago. That was after a number of years of me bringing this up as it relates to our budgetary process. It was two budgets ago, I believe, when the Minister of Finance was giving her speech and so on – the Budget Speech – and she said the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands is going to be very glad to hear that we've listened to what he was saying, we agree with him and we're going to put a process in place where we will be examining the books of agencies, boards and commissions. That was two years ago and I can get the *Hansard*. I don't have it with me now, but I could get the *Hansard*.

But after a number of years of lobbying for this and then we got the commitment it was

going to happen and then nothing happens. Maybe I shouldn't be surprised, given the fact that we had a democratic reform committee that ended up getting dissolved right before we were about to do public consultations because we had an election. My first question when we came back to the new Legislature was about getting that Committee back up and running and the Premier committed that yeah, it's with the House Leader and he will be in touch to get that up and running. That was two years ago and we haven't heard nothing from him.

E. JOYCE: We're consistent.

P. LANE: We're consistent, if nothing else, on breaking promises, not owning up to commitments. That's why I just want to bring this up again.

This may be old to people who've heard me say this before, but I will say it again for the record, we go through a fairly extensive budgetary process in this House of Assembly each year, and so we should because it's the people's money we're talking about.

I know the Minister of Finance is nodding her head in agreement there now and she can't wait to hear what I'm saying about this. I'm glad to see she's being very attentive and hanging on to every word.

We go through this process, as we should, with the people's money, billions of dollars – billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. As we all know, perhaps the most important piece in these deliberations of this budget is what is known as the Estimates process. Of course, the Estimates process is where we get to do a line-by-line-by-line examination of each department's budget. Members on this side of the House get to ask questions of the minister and the minister's staff. He or she will bring their staff with them for the session and we get to ask questions about the line by lines. We will see variances between what's budgeted for this year, what was budgeted for the year before, what was

spent the year before and what they're asking for this year.

We can ask questions around if you only needed this much money for consultants last year, this year you're asking for twice as much. Why? What are you planning on spending that money on? Or last year you spent X amount of money on travel, now you're planning on spending more on travel. Why? Are you going to more conferences? What are they? What's the benefit of going there to the taxpayer and so on?

It's a line by line. We do that with every department. It's a very, very important process. Like I say, it's probably the most important process because that's really where the Opposition gets the information, more so than listening to a budget speech. Because a budget speech is a lot of fluff and good announcements. It certainly doesn't detail on any of the negative things, just the positives. We're doing this and we're doing that and we're doing something else. So it's so important.

Now, when we do the budget – and this is something the public needs to understand and realize and I'm going to use the Department of Health, again. I've used it in the past. I'll use it again. I think it's a great example. We will do a line by line on the Minister's Office. There'll be a section there Minister's Office and we'll be questioning staff on why is the minister planning on spending more money on photocopying this year than last year or why did they only budget \$5,000 for photocopying but he spent \$7,000? He spent \$2,000 – who did all the photocopying? What's that all about?

AN HON. MEMBER: It was an election year.

P. LANE: Yeah, it was an election year the Members says.

We will question that, but then there will be a line there in the Department of Health, as an example, of – I'm not sure what the

amount is now. I'm just going to use it \$3 billion, \$2 billion, \$2.5 billion transferred to the health authorities. That's it. One line: \$2 billion to \$3 billion transferred over to the health authorities and that's it. There are no questions about \$3 billion. We just walk on past that one. We ask questions about photocopies, counting paper clips in the office and then we just transfer \$3 billion over to the Department of Health. No questions on that one.

The same thing with the Department of Education. I'm not sure what it will look like this year with the folding of the board and all that kind of stuff but same thing transfer money over to the school boards. A lot of money going through the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, Nalcor or Hydro, whatever. Just think about it, Memorial University, all the money flowing into Memorial University and CNA. We don't care about how much money they're spending photocopying over at MUN but we care about how much they spend over in the minister's office.

Just think about it for a second in terms of scrutiny of taxpayers' dollars. I'm not being critical of this government. It's the way it's always been. I'm not arguing that. It's the way it's always been. I'm just putting it out there to the public, putting it out there to Members of this House. Just think about what I'm saying for a second.

We value this process of the budget. We put in all this time. Members will be here when the budget starts doing Estimates in the nighttime and everything else, bringing in the staff. You're going to be here questioning. I've watched lots of Members over here, the Official Opposition and myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and the NDP, we're here with our books and we're here with highlighters. We've got a staff person writing down numbers comparing it, trying to figure out where the dollars are being spent, asking a lot of probing questions and really you're doing it for about one-eighth or one-fifth of

the budget in terms of the actual dollars that were questioned.

The rest of it is all going to ABCs, going to health authorities, going to ambulance services, going to MUN, going to CNA, going to the school boards. All that money is going over here. We're not questioning any of it. We just know it just went over there. No process to question any of that. We're going to concentrate on what's happening in the minister's office, then we're going to say we did a great job questioning that budget, but we really didn't. We really didn't.

We might have done a good job getting a handle on what's happening here at the Confederation Building, but where the real money is, the real money, same public money that we're all responsible for, they're all over here in these big pots and these entities, nobody questioning a thing.

Now, you might argue that we've got boards of directors and all this kind of stuff set-up to manage those things, to manage ABCs. MUN got their Board of Regents and there are health care boards and there were school boards. There's a board for the Liquor Corporation all that, but none of those people – and it's nothing against anyone on those boards – were elected by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to take care of their finances and to make sure that their money was best spent, not one of them. These are all non-elected individuals who are not directly responsible to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Forty people in this Chamber are the ones that are responsible.

So that's why I will say again, we need a process, which the minister committed that we were going to do and then we forgot all about it, where at least in every second or third – maybe every year – we bring in NLC and the health care board one year. We do a school. Well, we would have done a school board another year; bring in people from Nalcor another year, whatever, and start getting down to the brass tacks with

their budgets in a public forum so everybody can see what's going on in these entities where all the money is truly being spent.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always nice to get up here to represent the District of Exploits, especially during the Interim Supply because it gives us a chance to speak on a lot of issues in the district, of course. I do hear a lot of issues in the district. Of course, it's like anything; health care is probably the major issue in the district. I'm hearing cost of living is another big issue. Roads, of course, always comes up during conversations in the districts. Housing is becoming a big issue in the area. We have 300 people on the waiting list in Central Newfoundland for housing. That's an enormous list. That certainly needs to be addressed, needs to be brought down. I know there are some units probably need to be revamped, refurbished and that sort of stuff, but that is an amazing list in Central Newfoundland to have on the housing list for housing. So that has been a big concern.

Again, I'll just refer back to health care. Doctors have been leaving the health care system in Central Newfoundland; they're going elsewhere. Only this past weekend, I was talking to another constituent that said that they're losing their doctor. Not only are they losing their doctor, that leaves probably another couple of thousand people without a doctor. That's only this weekend that I heard that, so they're leaving.

I'm baffled with the long-term care situation in Central Newfoundland. We have two brand new units. We have 60 beds. We still have 25 beds that are left vacant. We've got

people taking up acute-care beds and can't get surgeries done. We can't move them into long-term care which is taking up our acute-care beds in the hospitals. We have people that can't get surgery done because we can't get people into long-term care.

What I've been hearing is that it's staffing. I mean, the minister came in last March – March 28, actually, I got a news release here. The minister and Premier came into Central Newfoundland, March 28, cut the ribbon. A big announcement on two long-term care units, up and running. The minister said: "I am pleased to see the new, long-term care homes in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor ready to be opened and accept residents."

Where we are, we still haven't got enough rooms in that facility. There are still residents waiting to go in that facility. If staffing is the issue, that bothers me as well. Last year, they opened up a Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor. They had no trouble to find staff – none. There were no competition numbers. There were no advertisements of the jobs, no postings, no résumé, but they had no trouble opening up a Premier's office. That office is probably \$250,000 a year, but we can't get staff. What did we get out of that? Sure, we could get five LPNs out of that, \$250,000, and we can't get our long-term care open.

That's a bit ridiculous. Our monies need to be used where it needs to be and right now long-term care is a big issue in the Central region. If there's \$250,000 we could come to, to get those long-term care beds open, let's do it. I mean don't go wasting money where it don't need to be. We've already got seven elected Members in Central Newfoundland. We don't need an extra voice. The Premier figures we do, but we don't. We certainly don't.

So that's very disturbing to hear that long-term care – and certainly we're hearing stories of long-term care. The news this week has been atrocious, to be honest with

you. I'm hearing right in my own District of Exploits of a lady – that's on the news. I've heard questions about it. We're getting questions about it. It's on the news now of the treatment of that lady was atrocious. The son has come out openly and said he's been told that it's staffing issues.

We have to correct this. We have to do better than this for our seniors. We have to do better than that for our residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, not wasting money where it's not supposed to be.

Now, of course, we're all told to stay tuned; there's some great news coming. I don't know. Where's the next Premier's office going to be open? I have no idea if that's the news we got because that is not news. That's only taking away monies from where we can actually use it. So we need to do better and we can do better and should do better on those options.

Also, Chair, I did mention housing. Cost of living, of course, is another big issue in the district. Gas and fuels alone are enormous. People trying to get to work, especially medium- to low-income earners, they find it very, very difficult to get to work and provide a satisfactory income for their families to be able to buy groceries, food, especially single moms, single parents and low-income families, of course, with children going to school, the cost of living is enormous. Some of that needs to be addressed so that families can have milk, healthy foods that they can eat and be alert when they go to school.

There are a lot of things in the district like that that I'm hearing, Mr. Chair. Every day, you stop in the gas station or the stores and people say, b'y, have you seen the price of this? Man, oh, man, have you looked at the price of meat today? It keeps going up and up and up and it never decreases.

Farmers, again, I talked to some farmers in the area and the cost of producing that food is becoming enormous for those fellas. The

parts that they have to do get for their equipment, the fuels that they have to get to operate that equipment. To clear a piece of land right now to be able to grow foods is almost out of the farmers' reach because it costs too much to clear that field so that they can have more land.

Speaking of land, everybody got a problem with Crown land. We hear it every day; I have file after file after file. Of course the minister is here, he is taking it all in, so that is good that we know that the minister is paying big attention to Crown land issues. So I am hearing that day after day. My office is being flooded with calls because of the Crown land issues and something needs to be done to rectify the Crown land issues we have.

People want to sell their homes to try to get into personal care homes or smaller apartments, only to be told after 50 years that, b'y, I don't own my home. All that I have been working towards to get myself in a retirement position, to build up a life for myself, is not there. I don't own it; I don't have it. That is a very, very big concern to a lot of the elderly residents in the communities right now. I hear it in my district, so that is something that certainly has to be looked at.

We need to find a solution for that because this is becoming a very huge problem all across the province is people finding out that they don't own the land that they own. They've occupied it for years and they have kept it up for years. Certainly we got have to sit down there and talk about that situation and for the minister to do something about it.

I'll touch on roads in the district. I know that this year the Roads Plan came out and there is not a big lot in the Exploits District as of yet. We know down in the lower part of the district, 350, 351, 352, it is always dangerous areas down there. There are roads that are deplorable; we have a lot of potholes, a lot of holes, a lot of washouts

and a lot of the sides of the roads being eroded. Right now, it doesn't seem much in the Roads Plan itself. So I'm hoping that this year, at least by June, a lot of the repairs will be done to those roads. I know last year I did have a lot of calls, a lot of emails from people with a lot of damage to their vehicles of tires, rims, even bumpers; high costs that was exorbitant to them. So I'm hoping to see a little bit more work done in that way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is indeed a pleasure to stand in this hon. House to represent the people of my district and, of course, to speak to Bill 21, Interim Supply. Mr. Chair, I had the opportunity to stand here last week and speak to this bill and, as my colleague from Bonavista said, there's always someone watching when we don't think they're watching, but there's always someone watching. From my district, people reached out to me since I spoke last on Interim Supply and I said I would bring their concerns forward.

As we all know, Interim Supply is going to provide the government with \$2.974 billion worth of money and, of course, this is going to ensure the funding for the continuance of operation for normal government operations.

Last year, in 2022, the Interim Supply was \$2.75 billion and we're being asked this year in this Legislature to approve \$2.974 billion, which, of course, is a significant increase. We can only hope that it will offset what was spoke about earlier, early tenders and funding for different departments. But I'm going to focus on a couple of departments this morning, as I said, since I've spoke last time. I'll go back to health care again.

Mr. Chair, it was alluded to earlier and one of my colleagues here in the Opposition said with respect to the cost of diabetic supplies. I spoke to three different families, different demographics, who are faced with the challenge of paying for their diabetic supplies for their family members. As was said earlier, we have people who are rationing insulin, we have people who are using outdated insulin, we have people who cannot afford to pay for the diabetic supplies and are, at times, being helped by a local pharmacy or a local individual who are paying for these supplies for certain people. In this age of 2023, it's hard to believe that we have families doing that.

I had an email and a phone call conversation with another gentleman from my district in Torbay who's waiting for surgery. He's waiting almost three years for surgery. He reached out to me to see if there was anything I could do to help him along or to give him some advice as to what to do. Mr. Chair, when we have an individual waiting three years for surgery, who is not part of the workforce, who is not being productive, it's a toll on him, it's a toll on not only his physical health but his mental health, his mental wellbeing and, of course, on his family's overall general wellness.

So when we look at the many issues that we have in health care, I do hope that the Minister of Health and, of course, the Minister of Finance, have a significant portion of this going back into health care to solve some of the problems.

One of the Members on the opposite side said earlier in debate when my colleague from Exploits was speaking that money is not an issue. Well, do you know what? That's great to hear, money is not an issue. I'm looking forward to great things from this budget, I really am, if money is not an issue, as a government minister just stated, well most or all of the concerns are going to be addressed in this coming budget.

I have numerous people in my district, Mr. Chair, without a family doctor, going to emergency rooms to try to get a prescription filled. As my colleague said earlier, 12 or 14 hours wait in an emergency room for a prescription being refilled. That's unacceptable.

Many seniors are reaching out looking for long-term placement, as again my colleague said earlier, with respect to the senior population and on the lengthy wait-list that we have, not only in my district, but right across the province. We have many seniors who are looking for an in at the various long-term care facilities.

Mr. Chair, when I look at all that we have to face and the decisions that are being made with respect to, of course, Interim Supply and we're leading up to the budget, I look forward to all of these concerns being addressed.

When I spoke last week, I spoke on Municipal Affairs and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs knows the issues and concerns that are throughout the 275 or so incorporated municipalities and the many Local Service Districts, but when I spoke last week I heard from two, not from my district but from across the province, whose councils are struggling and grappling with finding solutions for health care in their municipalities.

A municipal mayor and councillor should not be responsible for providing health care for their towns. I know first-hand with respect to what we have to do, with respect to the monies that we get in municipal taxation and what we have to do with our budgets and how it's spent. I can assure you when I was mayor of Pouch Cove for 7½ years, we did not have the money to spend on health care. We did not have enough money to go around to pay all the bills. We had to prioritize what needed to be done like any other municipality has to do and do that. Now you have to put health care on top of it.

The problem is, Mr. Chair, we have some municipalities who are wealthier than others and have the ability, the financial ability to do or to make changes in their municipality with respect to health care to offer doctors and LPNs and nurses different incentives, such as free land or a tax break for a couple of years on their municipal taxes. Well, the majority of municipalities in this province don't have that ability.

What that's doing now is it's causing friction between mayors and councillors and staff from one community to the other because one town is doing it, another town wants their municipal leaders to try to do whatever they can to make sure that health care is in their municipality as well. That's unfair. That is unfair, Mr. Chair, because you're putting pressure, you're downloading onto the municipalities and they're unable to do it. Much like it was with the public libraries some years ago when that was put back on to the municipalities as well.

Mr. Chair, I want to touch on the costs of living and I want to touch on the costs of living with respect to how it is affecting people who are availing of food banks. That's a serious issue in my district. I'd like to give a shout-out to the Northeast Avalon Food Bank in my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: They serve my district and the neighbouring District of Conception Bay East - Bell Island. The users of that facility are increasing. I've said it before in this hon. House, people who normally gave to the food bank, who donated to the food bank, are now availing of the food bank's service. I know it's not just in my district. We have 40 districts in this hon. House and I'm sure everyone is feeling it at some point in time. But I do know that the cost of living is affecting twofold. One, people's ability to give to the food bank; secondly, driving people to the food bank to avail of those services.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, it's concerning when an individual calls me or my constituency assistant calls the office to ask what the process is. This is the first time in my life that I've had to avail of a food bank. We cannot afford to live anymore. That hits home. I know it's not just me; it is a part of everyone's district in this year of 2023.

If money is not an issue, Mr. Chair, I look forward to the many concerns to be rectified in this budget. We're all looking forward to this budget coming up. As the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board said, Bill 21 is for the seamless operations before we get into the depth and discussion – her words – for budget 2023.

Well, I'm looking forward to the depth and discussion in budget 2023. We have so much to worry about. We have so much to be concerned about. Our constituents are hurting from many different facets and, of course, we always hear about when they are hurting and they're looking for some help. So I do hope that this budget does provide the relief when it's coming down on Thursday.

AN HON. MEMBER: Lots of money.

J. WALL: Lots of money. Well, we'll see, Mr. Chair, how the money goes. We will see how this all goes and how it's all addressed and where government looks as to where it's going to go. I do hope and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has heard me many times with respect to the Roads Plan, what money is going into roads and what other announcements are coming forward because all that, again, affects the individuals, it affects the municipalities and affects constituents right across the province.

So, Mr. Chair, I do appreciate the time that I have to stand in this hon. House to represent my district, to bring their concerns forward and I'll continue to do so as we listen, as we help and as we try to make life

better for all of our constituents going forward.

Mr. Chair, I thank you for your time and your attention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Chair.

We're here to discuss about Interim Supply or the *Supplementary Supply Act, 2022-2023 No. 2* which is Bill 25. Interim Supply is to pay the bills and to look after our front-line workers and all people that give of their time that need to be compensated to our government workers. In these times, I mean, we have a very aging province and something that I think that needs to really be addressed is, obviously, long-term care. In my district alone, the Burin Peninsula currently has an average age of 54. So we're not getting any younger, but any kind of degradation of services is not an economic driver to bring people toward us either.

We need to get our economy going, obviously, so we can get our people back to work and then we'll realize that these services are really needed and they are economic drivers to attract people to a certain area.

One of the biggest things for me, in my portfolio in looking after seniors and person with disabilities, is long-term care spaces. It's about looking after more spaces. It's about looking after the workers but, first and foremost, it's so important that we get it right, that we consider all things. Anything that we implement is going to impact the residents. So we want to make sure that the residents are thought of first and foremost when we look at that.

The biggest thing for long-term care, really, at this point, is the continuity of care

because as we have people that are losing their primary care physicians and stuff like that, it doesn't give them an opportunity to have that continuity of care. There are too many gaps in between from one visit to the next. So that continuity of care is really important.

One of the biggest things that I have spoke with the minister on, and I think we're all in agreement that splitting up couples after 60, 65 years of marriage because one has more complicated medical issues than the other is really unfortunate. We really need to get that right and it's time to focus on that now. That can't be put down the road any farther. That needs to be taken care of as soon as possible because, to me, that is the most unfortunate thing that is happening currently in our province. These people need to be with each other, they want to look after each other and they want to know what kind of care each other are getting.

Like I said, if it means putting the person with the lesser medical needs into the long-term care facility that the person that has more complicated needs has to go, then we have to look at that and we have to make it happen because unfortunately we're not serving our seniors correctly at this point by splitting them up. I think that's very unfortunate. It's an egregious way of looking at it. These are the people that blazed the trail for us; therefore, that's the reason why I'm bringing it forward again, to say that they deserve better and we can do better.

We're looking forward in this budget about health care. Obviously, our health care is not where it needs to be. I kind of question now the way we're looking at things and having one health authority, I kind of question the fact of how is that going to look for rural health care such as my district. Because like I said before and I'll say it again, we have no physical hospital in the District of Placentia West - Bellevue. We have to rely on the G.B. Cross in Clarenville, the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre and the Newhook centre in

Whitbourne. One health authority, is that going to ensure that the degradation of services stops in rural Newfoundland? I'm not sure. The jury is still out on that because it seems to be that the metro area seems to be getting bolstered but the rural areas are suffering because of that bolstering.

So I really hope that the government's impetus to change the category of a certain hospital is not to give them the ability to ignore the issues that are going on in rural Newfoundland. It's just not right. Like I said, I prefer to see that everybody is getting treated the same. It's the people of Newfoundland and Labrador's tax dollars that we are spending and therefore, to me, it's not about the choice of where you live or anything like that, it's about providing service to the people that deserve it most, and that's the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Especially the people of my district who all have to travel for health care services.

We're looking at getting a clinic and a new doctor in Arnold's Cove. That will be right in the middle of the district and that will help people along the way. There's a lot of economic upswing coming to the isthmus area and the Burin Peninsula and, therefore, we need to increase these services and help out our elderly as much as possible.

Just to switch gears a little bit, when we talk about Interim Supply, I spoke with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and I've been three years now – a little more than three years actually – talking to him about the bridge in Boat Harbour. The bridge in Boat Harbour is a very integral piece of infrastructure on Route 215. It's not a very big bridge; it's just a small bridge, but the thing is that underneath it's still done with creosote-soaked timbers.

Once we have a big rainfall, there's a bit of a sheen on the whole harbour. That's unfortunate because if there's no money in

Transportation and Infrastructure, it might be the Department of Environment that looks at it to say that we can't let this go on any further, it needs to stop now and get this bridge replaced.

What we're doing, we're not looking at replacing the bridge; what we're trying to do is get a culvert put there because then there will be less impact for the area that it's in. If this bridge goes down, then there are three other communities other than Boat Harbour that are affected. Brookside is affected, Petite Forte affected and South East Bight is affected.

Now to say that those are affected with this bridge is unfortunate because if something happens to this bridge, they're completely cut off from the Burin Peninsula. They have to take alternate routes or figure out some other way of getting to the main part of the Burin Peninsula or the Island of Newfoundland and Labrador itself.

I mean, just to let people know the importance of this bridge, not only for communities and residents that are travelling back and forth to get groceries and doctors' appointments and all that kind of stuff, last year alone there was \$9 million worth of crab brought in across that bridge. That's a lot of weight obviously, but the thing is that if that bridge goes down, what happens to that crab?

When we talk about these communities that will be disconnected, then it is a serious issue; nobody wants to be disconnected. We saw what happened with the Canning Bridge in Marystown. It's creating a whole different economy for the people in Marystown today. It's more expensive to do the things that you had done a month ago than it is to do today.

Like I said, to look at these bridges – and I understand the increase in the budget, I appreciate that, but the thing is this little bridge in 2020 was rated poor. I hope the minister can find it in his budget to have a

look at replacing this bridge with a large culvert because then we can still have the runoff into the harbour if there is another catastrophic event like an Igor or a Hurricane Larry.

Talking about the same area and talking about Transportation and Infrastructure, currently in the province, the last thing that I saw reported was that there was a \$2-million budget for brush cutting and ditching in the whole province. I would assure you today, Mr. Chair, that I can probably use \$2 million right now in my own district and it still wouldn't clean up all the brush cutting and ditching that I need to do.

The unique thing about my district is that every community, except for when you drive into Marystown, is off a branch. We cover 5,503 square kilometres so if you talk about brush cutting, Route 1 is the Trans-Canada Highway and we get a lot of transfers from the federal government to look after brush cutting and ditching there, but when we go off these branches, it's a provincial issue. We need the province to realize that when we're asking and when we're advocating on behalf of our residents for brush cutting and ditching, then maybe it should be a bit of a consultation as to what areas we're looking at.

I was lucky enough this year to secure \$149,000 of a \$2-million budget. When you look at 40 districts in the province, yeah, I feel proud that I batted above our weight and we were able to secure that much, but it went to the wrong area. It actually took down a natural snow fence down past the Terrenceville branch that was actually keeping the snow from being on the road. A lot of people can probably remember from years ago, the big diggers that were in trying to clear up this area just to get one lane through.

Like I said, maybe some consultation because down in the towns of Terrenceville and Petite Forte that I fought for the last three years, still hasn't been done. This

affects the people in Boat Harbour, South East Bight and Petite Forte as well. I look forward to talking about this again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to bring up an issue here again on behalf of the residents of the Bay of Islands that asked me to bring it up: Lark Harbour. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs was dealing with this. It was severe flooding in the lower part of Lark Harbour. They had floods again there when the tides rose to an exceptional level there about a month ago, a couple of months ago, actually. A lot of the residents got flooded out again along the beach.

We all know the winds are higher, the tides are higher and when they're on the lower part of the road they get flooded out. One house a few years back got blown over, actually blown over. The fire department themselves had to go in and they found them in the basement, these people.

I wrote the minister about relocation, about those people being relocated. The minister wrote back and said, no, it has to go under the relocation policy, which is 75 per cent and it would be a cost benefit to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What I remind the minister – and I'll do it now publicly on behalf of those five residents – and it was in 2017, I think, that Mud Lake had big floods. Mud Lake had big floods. I was there. It was devastating for a lot of people, very devastating. A lot of them had a hard time of it and a lot of them went through and lost a lot and a lot of them got some compensation towards it. But they couldn't get relocated because the relocation policy didn't allow it unless it was

75 per cent. Well, they changed it to 75 per cent since then, but a certain number, up to 90 per cent, I think, had to agree to it and it had to be a cost benefit to the government itself. That was the policy put in place and that's why it couldn't be done at the time and offered.

Fine, everybody understood that. Some people wanted to move, a few people did, some refused to move, which is fine again. There was never, ever a vote.

What happened when the Member for Lake Melville went and left as an independent and he went over with the Liberals. I just want to read a quote that he made in CBC news. He left as an independent, went for the Liberals: "... as well as offering compensation for resettlement for Mud Lake residents, as reasons for his return."

Now, Mr. Chair, that is troubling to me. That is troubling for me, personally. Not because of the Mud Lake residents, if some of them wanted to move and the policy was in place, I have no problem with that. I know the devastating. I know the fright of some of them. I know there was water quality monitoring put in place that came out later. I know all that. A lot of steps were put in place. Some still had anxiety; I understand that. I have no problem with it if you're going to do that, absolutely none.

My problem is that if you're going to break the policy to take a Member from an independent to put him as a Liberal, you have to exercise that policy for other people who has been flooded three and four times and every time the water goes high, they experience the same type of anxiety. You cannot just take that policy and say we want that Member because we may need him later on down the road, we may need an extra person because someone may put out some text messages and have a minister have to be removed because of a police investigation. So we need a bit of insurance.

So here it is, the Member for Lake Melville's own words. That's what got him to go over when they offered him. So I ask the question to the minister: Who offered it? Who offered that to break the policy of the Newfoundland and Labrador resettlement to get a Member to leave here as an Opposition, go back as a Liberal, but you won't give it to the people in Lark Harbour who got flooded out at least four times?

That's wrong. This is public funds. This is nothing about the residents of Mud Lake. This is about consistency.

So the Minister of Municipal Affairs wrote back and said no, no, no, it has to go through the community council, has to go through the regular policy. But, okay, I'll cross over today, give the residents, the five people, I'll cross over. If that's what it takes I'll cross over today, buy me off, come on.

P. LANE: Lisa said she don't want you.

E. JOYCE: She probably don't want me. No, I don't suppose she does. Once I starts, she won't want me, I guarantee you that. She better just not go pushing my buttons too much, I'll say that to the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, don't push my buttons too much.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: No, I'm just talking about this here, Mud Lake.

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: You want to buy me out?

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Member to direct his comments towards the Chair.

Thank you.

E. JOYCE: Okay, can you ask her to stop heckling and saying is this a threat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

E. JOYCE: I'm saying to you right here right now, that if you're part of a government that's going to turn around and then offer compensation to one group of people but not to the other group, it's wrong. It's wrong.

P. LANE: Sounds like an abuse of power.

E. JOYCE: It's pretty close to abuse of power, pretty close, pretty close to abuse of power.

Mr. Chair, I've told the people from Lark Harbour that I would bring this up. I would raise this issue. Mr. Chair, I'm raising this issue with government now. I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs to stand up in her place and say who offered that funding. Who did it come from? Was it you? Was it the Premier? Who offered it?

Here's the Member for Lake Melville's own words, after they offered it – I'll read it again: As well as offering compensation for resettlement in Mud Lake residents as reason to return to the Liberals. That's what's there. Not my words.

So I'll say to the minister, when you take a policy and you put a policy in place, you should make sure it's for all the residents across Newfoundland and Labrador. If you want to take and pick and choose because you need someone to cross the floor, it's wrong – it's wrong.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: We'll have to do a review on that.

E. JOYCE: Have to do a review on that.

So I'll just say to the government itself that those four or five residents that are experiencing flooding, they have the same anxiety as the people in Mud Lake. It was

severe in Mud Lake; I was there personally. I was there and I helped them out later. I understand all that. But the people who are in that same area, they have the same anxiety. One now got their basement shut down – two of them, actually, got it shut down. They boarded it up and made sure no water can get in. They know it's coming again. They took everything up, they got everything boarded up and all they got is concrete there.

P. LANE: How do they get help?

E. JOYCE: How do they get help?

So, Mr. Chair, I'm going to sit down and take my seat now, but I told those residents that I will bring that up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I hear the one minister over there clapping because I'm sitting down. I can tell you one thing and I'll say it to them all, if I got a concern from anybody from the Humber - Bay of Islands, I'll bring it up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I'll guarantee you that. I don't care who wants to go over there and mock me for saying oh, you're going to sit down. Well, Mr. Chair, I guarantee you, I brought up the concerns and I ask everybody to be treated equal in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I ask that if the government are going to offer people incentives to cross over to the Liberals, it's wrong. If government are going to offer those incentives for people to take care of residents in Mud Lake, which I have no problem with being done, absolutely none, but you should step in for the same policy for the people that are being affected by flooding who can't go through the normal policy as Mud Lake because they never had a majority of people who wanted to leave and they didn't meet any threshold whatsoever of the amount of funds, how it's

going to be a cost-benefit analysis to the province.

That was the policy and once the minister changed the policy and then changed the policy back again, that people can't use it, there's the problem. I ask the question once more: Who offered the money? Who offered it? I ask the minister because it was your department. Was it you? Was it someone else? Was it Cabinet? Who offered the money? Because this is not right to the rest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and it's not right to the people that I represent, the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, who is going through flooding, who have anxiety, who knows, when there's water coming up next for a high tide, they're going to be flooded out again. They just want to be treated the same as everybody else in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This government have the moral obligation to treat everybody equal in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'll say to the residents of Lark Harbour, when I come out, I'll give you this *Hansard* to let them know that I brought their concerns up in the House of Assembly and I will not stop until government treats all people in this province the same. This resettlement program is a prime example how they pick and choose the policy of what they want.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and represent the people of my district in the District of Ferryland. First of all I want to start on – I don't know where to start, to be truthful. I have no idea where to start, but I'll start on doctors. We've been battling this now for a year and a half. We have some

issues up there. They had two doctors there at one point. One had left and then another position came up in the district and it started off that they didn't even offer the job to start. So she was a doctor there. They could have offered her the job. No, so she had to call on it. She did that and, just through the jigs and the reels, it's just been unbelievable the treatment that we got in the district from government on this.

I spoke to the minister I am going to say last Friday night, and what came up was, well, she can go there if it's a fee for service, if she wants to do that. Well, that's not what she wanted. She was looking for a rural retention bonus. That's what it started out as and they could have done it and moved the doctor there in a rural area. I told him last year and mentioned to the Premier you could take all the glory you like, take the story and you put a doctor in a rural area, but you wouldn't do it. No, for complications – I have no idea why. I spoke here two or three times, last year, saying that I think we can get it done. Being positive – I thought we could get it done. It has still not happened.

They were saying fee for service. That was the last shove off. Now, that came up last week. That never came up all last year, fee for service, because it's something going on internally with Eastern Health and government that they can't fill this position, and it is not correct to not have it filled in the district.

I had people going to the clinic last week to get an appointment, nine days. Someone else got 21 days. The nurse practitioner is there two days a week and in Trepassey two days a week. The doctor used to fill in two days a week up there as well while the nurse practitioner was there. That's what she's looking to do in Trepassey and then go to Ferryland as well and cover the good part of the district. But no, that can't happen. They won't do it.

For the life of me, speaking to the doctor, speaking to the people in the area, Eastern Health, we met with the minister and he doesn't get into negotiations. He doesn't get involved in negotiations, but you can travel over to Europe and get involved in negotiations to get doctors here, but you can't do it here in rural Newfoundland. It's incredible. We can't get that doctor in the area.

There's a problem somewhere there between these two groups that they can't get this done. They'll say well, they're requesting too much or are asking too much. Get to the bottom of the problem and solve it and get the doctor back in the district. That's the issue in my district and has been going on for a year and a half.

Then you turn that to an ambulance that started last year in Trepassey. You try not to get wrapped up in this and try not to get too emotional, but I tell you it's some hard not to because all you do is get emails after emails. This is one: The system is broken. We're sick and tired of all the reports and studies and lack of action. Well, no doubt. You didn't need Sherlock Holmes to figure that out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: My spouse and I are among the numerous influx of new residents, and we, like many others in their 40s and 50s, the ambulance issue has us seriously reconsidering our residency in this area. The idea of an auto accident or health crisis resulting in over an hour's response is horrifying. It's absurd considering an ambulance sits in the district not being staffed and we don't seem to want to do something about that. The government is responsible for making them staff the ambulance. That's the issue we have.

Had a call this weekend up in the arena, a young girl fell into the boards.

AN HON. MEMBER: My granddaughter.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Your granddaughter?

Now, fell into the boards and she was on the ice for one hour waiting for an ambulance – one hour. I wasn't there at the day, but I had somebody message me: An ambulance with an issue in the arena. Now we're close to St. John's. We're a half hour from St. John's, but it's an hour – it's another 45 minutes back to St. John's from Mobile, or 40 at least. We know that.

So waiting on the ice for one hour for an ambulance to show up is terrible. It's terrible. So that's Mobile. That's the first part of this district in regard to the ambulance service from Cape Broyle. That has to come from Holyrood or Cape Broyle. We had choices, but we don't have a choice coming from Cape Broyle. It's not there.

There's another lady had said that if you're mother was 65 years old and with health issues of her own, would you expect her to do CPR on a man for an hour and 20 minutes while waiting for an ambulance? I can read the whole email; I'm not going to do it. There's not too much stuff in it, but it's something I'd say there that's probably not proper to say here. For an hour and 20 minutes performing CPR on somebody that lived next door to you. That is not proper. That's not right. That's not good enough by this government. That is not good enough with an ambulance that's sitting 15 minutes away at the most, from that person that emailed, at the very most.

They took it last year out of Trepassey. The big word last year was dynamic dispatching. That's what they were going to have when they took the ambulance out. That's from the previous minister that was there, dynamic dispatching. Now it's called rapid response or I don't know what it's called. That plan came out on a Friday night. That's the issue that I'm getting at here is planning. It was doctors; now it's fee for service. When did that come into the equation? That's a plan we got.

Now you're going to give out money to doctors down in Bonavista and every other health care clinic. What you're doing is pitting all the communities against each other, is what we're at. Don't say it's not going to happen because everybody is saying it, every district is saying it. Well, why can't I get a doctor for \$200,000? Now that's the plan we've got. Now it's a great initiative, there's no question. But that's not a plan.

Now you're going to pit that doctor that's over in Stephenville - Port au Port somewhere, they're going to go to Bonavista now and they're going to get \$200,000. How is that going to help? Someone else got to go to Stephenville - Port au Port. All they're going to do is change areas and now they get \$200,000? Is that the idea? Because there's no thought put into it, or there might be a lot of thought, I shouldn't say that because you're trying, I give you that. I give you that; you're trying. But the plan is not working. I give that you're trying.

You put a rapid response team or a rapid – I can't even remember what it's called now, I'm that frustrated with this stuff – they're putting a rapid response team up there with an ACP on it. Well that should be there with the other ambulance that should be staffed there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: That's what should be there to take care of a person. She can be roving in the area, drop in and take care of that person and triage them until an ambulance gets there, whether it's in Cape Broyle or Holyrood. But it should be there besides that. Instead, we'll take one out of Trepassey and move it to Cape Broyle. There should be two in Cape Broyle. Now there's one in Cape Broyle and it's not being staffed. Then they're going to tell you why they did it: lack of calls.

It's not about calls. I went through it last year in the petition. I'm after going through it, I don't know how many times. It's about geography. They're up in the country. You go up in the country when it's winter, when it's snowing and when it's blowing, it's not fit to be on the road, not fit. But the ambulance drivers up there, they lived in there for years and they know the area.

So you take the ambulance and move it down to Cape Broyle. Now when an ambulance gets called, they're two hours away. They're in red alert. I'd say they're in red alert everyday and they're probably answering calls from further down the shore. It depends on who's going to dispatch them and where. But it's not acceptable. It's the geography.

There are seniors in the district. Someone called today in the Trepassey area that's been living there 60 years. So today she doesn't have a family doctor. She called, can't get an appointment, there's no family doctor. We know there's no doctor there. Go to see the nurse practitioner. Because she hasn't been there in two years, she hasn't been sick; she's no longer a patient there. Now there's something wrong with that. I have to get into it a little more, but to get that call is not acceptable – totally not acceptable.

I could stand here all day and talk about stories, stories upon stories and emails coming in on the ambulance issue.

Another gentleman was driving down from Fermeuse, got as far as Calvert and had a heart attack, had to go back to Ferryland to the clinic where the people in the clinic took care of him for an hour and 40 minutes. It ended up with a bad result. I feel sorry and certainly pass on my condolences to the family, but an hour and 40 minutes waiting for an ambulance in Ferryland.

To hear the story that the lady wrote in an email of driving the car and looking back at

him: What am I going to do? He said keep going. It's just horrifying to read.

That's only one. It's going to happen again. It is definitely going to happen again. It could have happen the weekend at the arena. I mean, it's just unbelievable that it could happen.

That stuff is going to happen, we can't stop that, but if we got an ambulance in the area, we got a chance to make it. If it's not there, we have a less chance of making it.

If it's there, it still happens. We've had lots of people in our area that had a heart attack or something happened, an ambulance goes and they don't make it, but we have a chance if the ambulance is there. When it's not there, we have less of a chance. That's what we're trying to get at. That is what we need back in our area is an ambulance, back and staffed in our area.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

It's a pleasure to get up again to speak. This is my second time now on Interim Supply as we lead into the upcoming budget on Thursday. It's, I guess, our last opportunity to speak on this end of it before we reconvene in two weeks' time, so it's important.

As I hear my colleagues speak, and you listen to all sides, it's pretty amazing this day and age what we're listening to ambulances and ER closures. These are pretty basic things in 2023, but then it's always led by the backdrop of we're doing good. Things are great. We have a surplus. We can weather this. Everything is wonderful.

I'm okay; I'm a cup half-full type of person too. I'd rather think positive. I think it's great to be positive, but I have to wonder sometimes when I flick on the news and I hear this commentary, and I hear it in the House here, what province are they living in? As much as I would love nothing better than to be all of these roses and cherries and everything being wonderful, that's not what we're seeing. That's not what we hear.

I just listened to my colleague from Ferryland. He's very frustrated over one service, an ambulance service. That has to be one of the most basic things in life, to get you – and that's not saving your life. Sometimes they will. Sometimes they won't. That's getting you somewhere where they can save your life. We're talking about 45 minutes to an hour to an hour and a half and he's fighting daily. I hear it in our caucus room, in this House, on the media. He's fighting for his district. That's what he's elected to do and I commend him for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: But why we have to do this time and time again. I've said it before, I was out on the steps of the Confederation Building last week and we had a crowd from Whitbourne. They want their ER open. They've got urgent care out there. They're not satisfied. They want 24-hour emergency care. Is that, that much to ask? I don't think it is. The building is out there. The Newhook building is out there. Let's staff it.

We have HR problems. Fair enough. We're opening all these family teams that used to be the collaborative care. They've go the name changed into Family Care Teams, I guess. We're setting up all them throughout the province. We have to find staff for them. We can't keep robbing Peter to pay Paul, but there's a recruitment effort on the go. Fair enough. Put a couple of doctors out in Whitbourne. Staff that if you want to look at initiatives. You can't be just running around putting on Band-Aids. And that's what I see sometimes. When I hear the Premier and

the ministers across the way always say things are good. We've changed. Things improved drastically. Fair enough. But we're far, far, far from out of the woods.

Listening to that is cold comfort to those people still struggling. The protestors daily on the step. We were surprised today when we came in that there wasn't another group out there. I guess we'll find out. It might be next week they'll be here.

But that's not good enough. You know, we'll play politics and we can be accused of doing the to and fro in this House. Fair enough. We're not playing politics. We're just speaking for people. My colleague, once again, he's reading the emails. He didn't write the emails. The emails were wrote to him.

I stand in this House now in my role as shadow minister for Education and early childhood development, I'm asking questions of the minister responsible based on meetings and conversations and pleas we've gotten from the industry, not only my district, right across all of our districts.

So I'll stand here in my place and I'll say to the minister what he's saying was not factual. You're called out then if you say the wrong word because then you play semantics with your words. You're not allowed to use this word in the House; you're not allowed to use that word in the House.

Then I read *The Telegram* this weekend and it was pretty clear what *The Telegram* wrote. It was a lot stronger words than I used. But then I find the minister stands in his place today – and he's not talking to me, he's talking to the people in the province when you do this stuff. He stands in your place today and he's telling me all my information is incorrect. The person I'm talking to, which is not the person I'm talking to, refutes everything. I don't know who that person is. I know the people I'm talking to. I trust their information.

But here we get this case of smoke and mirrors again. You're not dealing with the issue. You're not answering any of the questions that matter to people. You're playing semantics. Semantics will not solve any of our problems. Semantics will not create those extra thousands of child care spaces we need. Semantics will not fix the early childhood educator wage grid problem. Semantics will not fix the ambulance issue up in Ferryland. Semantics will not fix the health care problem we have right through the province: Whitbourne, Bonavista, it will not fix it.

I spoke last week about Conception Bay South. We have nothing. I saw 10 Family Care Teams announced today or collaborative care clinics announced. CBS was nowhere to be found. I'll say it again and I'm going to continue to say it, we have 28,000 people in Conception Bay South – 28,000. An urgent care centre for the St. John's metro region but they carved off CBS. We're not part of metro. We're only part of metro when it suits them. That's not good enough.

I'll repeat: that's not fair to the people of Conception Bay South. I know they're not all Tory areas they're putting these collaborative care clinics but, again, how can you ignore Conception Bay South? How can you ignore the largest pocket of people outside the City of St. John's? How could we be deemed as second-class citizens? Are we not worthy of that? It really irritates me, it really frustrates me and it should frustrate everyone in my district. I'll make sure people in my district are well aware of what's happening. This government are turning their back on the people of CBS. It infuriates me when I read these listings today.

I talk to the minister regularly and I don't agree – we'll agree to disagree – that we should be pushed off to another time. We're living here now and people in CBS, when you're talking red alerts, Conception Bay South are without an ambulance many days

too – many days. They're on red alert constantly. Just think about that, 28,000 people are in red alert constantly. Where are you going take them to? The same thing, you're looking at 40 minutes. Parts of my district – and my colleague for Harbour Main, a part of her district up further – it's longer than 30, 40 minutes. That's the reality you're dealing with.

Is that fair to those people? I don't think so. But then, when I turn on the news we're doing great. Things are turned. The province has turned. We've turned a corner. Things are wonderful. They're all over the world. They're ringing bells here. They're in New York, they're in Nova Scotia and they're in Ottawa. They're in Poland – a photo op in Poland.

Now I'm telling you, the amount of money this government needs to invest in film alone, and I'm talking old-fashioned camera film – there's probably money in it. It's a good thing we have electronics now because it's one snap after another. If we used the old-fashioned flashbulbs, they'd all have to wear sunglasses, because all you'd see are flashbulbs flying everywhere. That's all I see. It's photos everywhere. You're down in Poland, there's a photo; you're down in New York, there's a photo. There are photos everywhere.

People who are home in Newfoundland, where we're to on the ground, are crying for an ambulance. They're crying for an emergency room. But then in the backdrop, things are great, we're doing wonderful. They're going all over the world to praise up; we're doing great.

Again, it's an alternate universe. It's not in the universe I'm living in and most of my colleagues here, we don't live in that universe. But for some reason Members on the other side – now maybe not all, a lot of Members on the other side live in that universe.

Mr. Chair, it is something I brought up last year and I'm expecting that I'm going to probably get ahead of myself on it. So the budget is coming on Thursday. I know last year's budget and the last couple, if I am not mistaken, weren't probably as good as what I am expecting this budget will probably be, because all I hear is everything is good, so we're expecting this. There is an announcement every day. Every day we have another announcement coming, one after another, after another.

In government acronyms, I think that next week we're going to see the LOP again, the Liberal outreach program, L-O-P for short. I'm expecting I'll see red jackets on all the streets going around knocking on the doors with a brochure in their hand, jamming it in people's doors, the good news budget. It is called the LOP; it's an outreach program to get the message out. Now, ironically, this year they may have some good news to share. But if you come up to CBS, if you come up to Ferryland, if you come up to a lot of districts – Harbour Main and I'll go right across – I don't know if they're going to get the right response.

They must do a bit of screening ahead of time. They're not knocking on the right doors because the doors I've talked to and the people I speak to don't want to see no Liberal outreach program. But you get these pictures – we'll see them next week. Mark it down, we'll see groups on the streets with the brochures and the selfies and everyone is happy. They're going to be in certain picked areas. I figure they must be going to see family members because they're not the people I'm talking to.

It's insulting – and I say that in all sincerity; I'm not being facetious – the people; it insults the electorate of this province. They don't believe this nonsense, but this crowd opposite got a great way of trying to – and I like to refer to this; the Premier does a great job of it. It is like psychological, lull you into thinking everything is fine, because

everything goes bad and then you get a good announcement.

When it goes bad there is a good announcement. It is amazing how you could chart that along a piece of paper. It's a good announcement. Following everything that goes bad, they come out with a good announcement. Lately, you can't keep up with the announcements. They can't even remember what they're announcing.

I'm sure they're going to forget one of these days and announce something wrong. I hope they announce a Family Care Team for CBS. Then they won't be able to pull it back. That's my hope anyway.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am glad to have another opportunity to speak.

I have a laundry list of issues so I don't know where to start. Thank God we have all night to get through my list. I appreciate the minister there is so anxious to hear what I have to say.

One issue I just want to bring up, first of all, is that school bus incident that happened in Mount Pearl in my district. The bus was coming from Newtown Elementary and it happened on Munden Drive. I just want to say for the benefit of the minister – I'm sure she would anticipate this anyway – there are a number of concerned parents. A couple of them have reached out to me, certainly, over that incident.

I do understand the minister saying that buses are inspected the summer before school starts. This bus, I guess, would have been part of that. I think she indicated in QP

that it was also inspected in September by a government-certified inspection process.

I guess we'll wait and see what the investigation yields. I understand it's being investigated by the RNC and by her department – and I am not a mechanic and I'm not mechanically inclined either. But it just seems odd to me that if a bus was inspected in just January month, and now just a couple of months later the whole bottom drops out of her, something doesn't feel right to me. A couple of parents have reached out to me and we discussed it. That's how they feel as well, that inspected or not inspected is different than – brakes can go on something, things can happen, but for the whole axle or whatever it is to just drop right out of that bus, if it was inspected one would have to question the quality of that inspection. Was it inspected properly and so on?

I know we've had incidents in the past. I believe we had charges laid, I read in the paper not that long ago, against some individuals for not doing proper inspections and so on. So I'm not going to prejudge what's going to come out of this investigation by the RNC and by the department, but it is very concerning that a bus could be inspected in January and then, two months later, to have a serious incident like this.

Certainly, when it comes to the safety of our children – which the minister says is paramount and, obviously, it should be paramount; I would agree with her on that wholeheartedly – then we need to get to the bottom of this. If there's something not being done properly, and if the system needs to be tweaked or improved for better inspection processes to make sure things are being done properly, then whatever we need to do we need to do, but this is not a nice to do one. When it comes to the safety of our kids, that has to be a top priority.

So I look forward to hearing the outcome of that investigation, but not to be unexpected.

I would say to the minister, parents who have reached out to me from that school, parents with kids who are on that bus are very, very concerned and very interested to see what comes out of this investigation. I hope that those matters are going to be made public and certainly brought to the attention of the parents involved as to the follow-up on this accident.

Another item – which also goes right to the same minister, actually. I had the pleasure of last weekend – not this weekend past, the one before – of attending the Special Olympics Winter Games out in Grand Falls-Windsor.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was good to see you there.

P. LANE: Yes, and a number of my colleagues were there. My colleague from the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis for sure, and, of course, the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor and the Member for Exploits was there and Conception Bay South. There was a number of Members there.

I'm sure everybody would agree, that attended, it was great games. I always say whenever I go to anything related to Special Olympics, whether it be Mount Pearl Special Olympics or just Special Olympics in general on the provincial stage or whatever, I always leave feeling a lot better than when I went there. It always puts a smile on your face. It's always very inspiring to see those athletes and how they take so much joy in just participating and to cheer each other on and it's a wonderful experience. Anyone who hasn't gone to a Special Olympics event, I certainly encourage you to do so.

One of the things that came up there that was brought to my attention – actually, I noticed it myself before it got brought to my attention, but it did get brought to my attention by a couple of people – and that was they had an event there that was bowling and the issue of accessibility and this 1981 rule. I know it's an issue – I've

been told – that the Member has been lobbying on and so on as well.

But to have an event like the Special Olympics or any event, even if there was an event just for the general public, to be able to go to a bowling alley and have to have people to actually lift the wheelchairs through the door, carry a wheelchair down over the steps. Then once you actually got in there, if you wanted to bowl, there was another step down that you had to lift the wheelchair down onto the bowling alley. Then on the bowling alley itself, it had a little lip and you had to lift up just to go bowling.

A number of people brought it to my attention. I know the minister is aware because I just got copied on a letter that she responded to some people from New-Wes-Valley that were there, who I was talking to, who sent her a letter. They were impacted by it.

The reason why this is allowed to continue is because of an issue that's been brought up in this House of Assembly. Ever since I was elected in 2011, we were talking about this and we're still talking about it. It's the *Buildings Accessibility Act* and, in particular, a rule that's there, a policy, a section of the act that talks about the 1981 exemption.

So basically, any building that was built before 1981 doesn't have to be accessible. We've been talking about this at least since 2011 and it's still not addressed. Now, some is the fault of us, oh well, we have heritage buildings and so on, how do you make that wheelchair accessible and so on? Well, I would say that there are ways to make anything wheelchair accessible if you wanted to, but forget about those little exceptions. I mean if we have a building that's basically a square box or big rectangular box, that's all they are, but they just happen to be built before 1981 don't have to be accessible.

So this place, like I say, had to lift the wheelchair down over the stairs to get in

there. The alleys weren't accessible. There wasn't enough width really to get around. The bathrooms – my God, the bathrooms were hardly big enough for just a regular person to utilize, let alone in a wheelchair. It was just so obvious and particularly with the backdrop of Special Olympics, and there were a couple of athletes there in wheelchairs and so on, it just really highlighted the need to address this.

I'm not just picking on this one particular facility because we can go around St. John's, we can go around Mount Pearl – I mean, you can go anywhere around the province and you'll see the same thing. Now thankfully there are some property owners who've taken it upon themselves, to be good citizens. Maybe they say – well, it's actually good for business. So maybe that's the motivation. Maybe it's just to be good people, to be inclusive. There are a lot of places that are older than 1981, but the businesses have still made them accessible anyway.

But there are others that continue to be not accessible. They don't have to do it so they're not going to do it, and in this day and age it's totally unacceptable. So I know in the letter of response from the minister, that I got copied on, to this individual from New-Wes-Valley, she indicated that the Accessibility Act was under review and here's the document. Here's *What We Heard*. This is an issue. We didn't need to do that review to say this was an issue because this has been an issue for a long, long time. My question is: When are we going to address that issue?

I would certainly ask the Minister of Service NL, if she gets up to speak at some point in time, maybe she could address that, as to what are your intentions, Minister, in terms of addressing this issue. We can do reports and studies, here's *What We Heard* – that's all wonderful. When are we going to actually change the legislation and make accessibility a priority here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Unfortunately, I see I'm out of time but thankfully I have the rest of the evening to get through another much longer laundry list of issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

It's been an interesting afternoon of listening to my colleagues in the House talk about their budgeting priorities. I guess everyone is wanting to have input into the budget which will be delivered on Thursday, March 23.

I think it's notable, Chair, that it's a little early this year. Officials have worked very, very diligently as they often do – as they always do, I should say – to make sure that we have a good budgetary process in place. They have checked every number. They have compiled the Estimates books. It's going to be a very interesting spring of reviewing those Estimates books, listening to the questions that are being asked, delving into the numbers and ensuring that we have, what I am going to say, a very good scrutiny and accountability for the money being spent in this province, Chair.

For the people who are listening today, we are talking about Interim Supply. That is a bill that goes through the House of Assembly, just around budget time every single year, just before budget, that provides what I'm going to call interim funding. It provides funding for the ongoing operations of government so that once the budget is brought down, good scrutiny can occur, good accountability can occur but there's still money for the operations of government.

It's very important, I think, for people to understand what we're trying to achieve today. This is day three, Chair, of continuing to talk about Interim Supply. Of course, with Interim Supply, because it is a budgetary bill, you can speak about anything that is happening in your district or any concerns that you have in government.

I've heard, I think, everyone in this House comment that they will be supporting Interim Supply. That is a normal process, Chair, because, of course, this gives money for the continuous operations of government. This is not incremental to budget. This is what is included in budget and there is a percentage taken based on the requirements around current and capital accounts. I know that there's a lot of discussion around what is a current account and what is a capital account and how do we come to the number? Well, it's basically we take the numbers that would be required for the normal operations.

Sometimes, Chair, the normal operations would include things like any contractual obligations that we need to make early in the year for things like transportation and infrastructure. So that would be included in the Interim Supply funding.

This year, we're asking for \$2,974,162,700 and that would help us to meet payroll. It will help us to provide income support, health care, education and other expenditures that will be required up until the budget passes.

So on that note, Chair, and recognizing, I think, that my colleagues are ready to move forward, I'll take my seat, thank my colleagues around the House for their comments around Interim Supply and, of course, the broader budgetary issues that they raise and thank them for the diligence that they place towards the review, accountability and transparency of the government expenditures.

Thank you very much, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 21)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2024 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for

the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 21 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 21 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of Supply.

B. WARR: Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the sum of \$2,974,162,700."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2024 the sum of \$2,974,162,700."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 21, and further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Deputy Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 21, the Interim Supply bill, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, that the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service." (Bill 21)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 21)

On motion, Bill 21 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 21)

On motion, Bill 21 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 21)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2024 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 21)

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm looking for a message but there's no message on loan and tax bills, so we're in good shape.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider a resolution relating to the advancing or guaranteeing of certain loans made under *The Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957*, Bill 28.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Trimper): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 28.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

*"That it is expedient to bring in a measure further to amend *The Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957*, to provide for the advance of loans to and the guarantee of the repayment of bonds or debentures issued by or loans advanced to certain corporations."*

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Chair.

Today I stand in this hon. House to bring forward an amendment to *The Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957*, for the extension of a provincial guarantee of the bank line of credit for the Stephenville Airport Corporation.

In 2005, the provincial government provided a financial guarantee for the operating line

of credit for the Stephenville Airport Corporation. A guarantee of \$350,000 was initially approved and then, in 2010, some five years later, it was increased to \$600,000, with an additional increase of another \$300,000 authorized in 2016, for a total of \$900,000.

The last approval in this House of Assembly was to extend the expiry date for the \$900,000 guarantee to March 31, 2023. The proposed amendment is to extend the expiry date for the guarantee for the Stephenville Airport Corporation to March 31, 2024.

Speaker, the airport in Stephenville has been an integral part of the Stephenville-Bay St. George region for many decades. For several years, the Stephenville Airport Corporation, the Town of Stephenville and other partners have been focused on identifying new opportunities to address viability and sustainability of the airport.

As we have all witnessed, the pandemic has deeply impacted the air transportation industry, including airports. The significant disruption to passenger movements, globally, during the past three years has resulted in different operational and planning approaches by airlines and airports. The town continues to have acquisition negotiations and anticipates a completion soon, as that is what has been communicated to ourselves as well as to, of course, the media – we've seen that in the last number of weeks – with subsequent and hopefully substantial investment and spin-off opportunities and benefits.

Pending acquisition, Stephenville Airport Corporation will pay off and close the line of credit and the provincial government will terminate the loan guarantee. But, as I've said today, we are extending it to give ample time and opportunity to March 31, 2024. I look forward to the support of my colleagues in approving this amendment so that we can support the Stephenville Airport as it goes through its acquisition process.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers to the bill?

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

When I stood this time last year to talk about a loan guarantee for the Stephenville airport, I didn't anticipate that I would be standing again this year to talk about a loan guarantee for the Stephenville airport.

I, and my colleague across the way, attended an event in September of last year, 2021, a significant announcement being made that the airport had actually been sold. It had talked about the significant planning that was going to take place and the potential for a significant number jobs, so it created a lot of hope in the Town of Stephenville and the surrounding area that this would come to fruition.

Unfortunately, we're here today because that sale has not been completed. While there have been many dates set aside for the completion of the sale, it still has not happened. Now, the latest, as the minister alluded to, we are being told that hopefully it will be completed sometime by the end of April. It is unfortunate that it has taken a significant period of time for this to occur, but the total gratitude has to go to the taxpayers of the Town of Stephenville because it has been the taxpayers of the Town of Stephenville who have kept this airport open.

The Airport Corporation has tried to bring additional business to the airport, but they have been sporadic because, of course, as we heard about the pandemic. The taxpayers of the Town of Stephenville have continued to provide the funding that is necessary to keep that airport open. So they are looking to make sure that this sale goes

through so that they will no longer have to carry that burden.

It is a tremendous asset, I would argue, not just for the Town of Stephenville but for the whole Bay St. George area, and indeed the province, because there is significant land and opportunity there but it can only become an opportunity if someone is willing to turn it into an opportunity.

We have all waited anxiously for this last year and a half for that to happen and we continue to wait for that to happen and hope that at least if some of what has been talked about and what has been promised actually occurs, then the Town of Stephenville and the surrounding area will certainly benefit from increased development.

The one thing I would like to point out again, though, is the importance of the Stephenville airport to the air ambulance program. There are a significant number of flights in and out of Stephenville airport by air ambulance. When you think about it, as the airport west of Corner Brook, it's certainly the closest airport for access to people who need to be medevaced out by air ambulance.

It's also unfortunate, though, that what the government actually pays for that airplane to land at Stephenville doesn't cover the cost of the requirements of the airport when it comes to the maintenance of the airstrip itself, especially in the winter months. The cost of snow clearing and maintaining the airport and keeping it open far exceeds the small amount of revenue that they get from landings by the air ambulance.

We all hope, myself and my colleague across the way, that this is the last time we will have to stand and talk about a loan guarantee for the Stephenville airport and that next year we'll be here talking about the amazing business that's happening at the Stephenville airport and how busy it is and how we're all benefiting from that.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

S. REID: Thank you, Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to speak on this motion again and to speak about the Stephenville airport and the importance of the Stephenville airport. As other speakers have said, it's an important piece of legislation that comes to this House every year. It's a loan guarantee for about \$900,000 that helped sustain the Stephenville airport through a rough period of time.

As the Member opposite just said, we're hoping that this will be last time we will bring it to the House and we're hopeful that the current process of divesting the airport to the private sector will be successful very soon and that we'll see some more activity at the airport.

I'm very optimistic about the future of the airport. I think it's a wonderful asset there. Most people here maybe know that it was one of the largest airports in the world in terms of the size of the runway and the facility that's there. In fact, it's interesting, at one point, the Stephenville airport was an alternative site for landing the Space Shuttle. That'll give you the scope of the infrastructure that's there and what the opportunities might be.

I'm a big believer in the private sector in terms of being able to take a facility like this and realize the potential that's there. So I'm very encouraged that it's a private sector group that is working towards purchasing the airport and have big plans in order to develop things, because the Stephenville airport, it's a big facility. It has lots of infrastructure, but, also, it's very rare to find

an airport so closely associated with a seaport and Stephenville is one of the areas that has that sort of connection.

Given everything that's happening in the Bay St. George area, I think there are a lot of opportunities to be had in that area in the next few years. I'm hopeful that we'll see more economic activity. I think this motion today is to put in place, or keep in place, the finances that allow for the airport to make a transition to the private sector.

Also, I think I would be remiss if I didn't note a few people, other than those in the House, who have supported the airport, too. The mayor of Stephenville, Tom Rose, has been an outstanding, in my opinion, supporter of the airport. He's gone far and above to support the Stephenville airport and members of the town council in Stephenville have done the same thing. So I know they're strong supporters of the airport and I think their efforts will come to fruition in time.

I just want to encourage all other Members, as well, to support this motion here today, to support the airport so we can move forward to the next stage and see some economic development in the Bay St. George area. It's a wonderful asset for the whole province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I had the privilege of landing in Stephenville once at the airport a long time ago. But I just want to say, hopefully, this is the last time we'd have to do this for Stephenville. I wish them well in that endeavour. It's a lot of opportunity there, especially with an airstrip. It brings a lot of opportunity and it brings a lot of different opportunities that, especially

in aerospace now. It's a growing industry that we are seeing a lot of changes. It's interesting that this started off its life as a military base and now it's moving on towards the aerospace industry.

I wanted to say I wish the community of Stephenville and surrounding area well. I hope that this is the start of something better for them, the start of growth and opportunities for them. I do want to say that.

This comes up every year and we talk about it every year. Maybe this is the year that they finally get this through the door. I wish them well and I hope that they have all these opportunities with, hopefully, their new owners. Maybe we can see some different growth and some diversification of industry in this province.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of the Committee.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have made progress and ask leave to sit again.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

L. DEMPSTER: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now stand in recess until 5:45, 30 minutes.

SPEAKER: This House do stand recessed until 5:45 p.m. today.