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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA*

Wednesday

March 4, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

**SPEAKER (Lane):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

**Government Business**

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue be appointed Deputy Speaker, seconded by the Premier.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

This is a formality that we do every time the Chair is vacant. The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue has been nominated and I think that we need to make sure that the House is in good order and have the people in the place to do the jobs that we have to do here. That is how we stand today.

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers?

Seeing none, all those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against?

The motion has been carried.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Member for Labrador West be appointed Deputy Chair of Committees, seconded by the Member for Lake Melville.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Much like the last one, this is to keep the House in order so we can move forward with daily proceedings. It is just a formality.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'll just stand for a moment to congratulate both – the first role, I would have held back some years ago, only the second female to serve as Deputy Speaker in the Chair. At one point, Speaker, you were my Deputy Chair of Committees, so it is honourable roles to hold in this House.

I wish you both well – not the least of, sometimes the Speaker needs to use the washroom and he can't sit in the Chair for four hours, so I want to wish you well and we look forward to working with you both as we do the people's business here in this hon. House.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers to the motion?

Seeing no further speakers, all those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** Those against?

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

Mr. Speaker, I move:

WHEREAS section 7 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* prescribes that, upon nomination by the House of Assembly, the Sergeant-at-Arms shall be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council by Commission under the Great Seal.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Mr. Alex Brennan be appointed as Sergeant-at-Arms.

It is seconded by the Deputy Speaker.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I get into a little bit of a conversation about Mr. Escott, I'm going to tell you a little bit about Mr. Brennan.

So section 7 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* prescribes the appointment of certain House Officers, including the Sergeant-at-Arms. There was a vacancy in this position due to the retirement of our previous

Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Robert Escott, as of December 31, 2025.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** In accordance with the act, the Speaker indicated that his preference was to conduct a publicly advertised, merit-based recruitment process in accordance with the practices of the Public Service Commission. As required by the HOAAIAA, consultations were held with the Management Commission, the Clerk of the Executive Council and the Chair of the Public Service Commission respecting this approach and there were no objections.

This position was publicly advertised on January 15, 2026, with a closing date of January 30, 2026, and interviews were conducted mid-February.

The first-ranked recommended candidate following the interview process was Alex Brennan. Mr. Brennan recently retired as the inspector of Street Patrol with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. Mr. Brennan has 30 years of experience as a commissioned officer in both the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Thank you for your service.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** He was sworn into the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary on the 30th of November 1994. He has been employed on Operational Patrol Services Training Division and Criminal Investigation Division. He was an inspector in the Operational Patrol Services division, a crisis negotiator and a commander of the Public Order Unit since 2018.

He planned and executed police crowd operations around the Confederation Building, and after 30 years of service, he retired on the 28th of February 2026. He is a graduate of Memorial University of

Newfoundland with a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in political science. He holds diplomas in command and staff, joint command and staff, and Canadian strategic securities programs.

After 31 years of service in the Canadian Armed Forces as a reservist, he retired at the rank of colonel in 2018. He served at CFB Goose Bay for internal security on Operation Unique in 1989. He was in Cyprus on Operation Snowgoose as a dismounted platoon commander with the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Canadian Regiment 1991.

In 1993, he deployed with the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry on Operation Harmony in Croatia, where he was employed as a mechanized platoon commander. During this tour, he fought in the Battle of Medak Pocket where he was later awarded the CF Wound Stripe, and his unit received the Commander-in-Chief's Commendation.

In 2008, he deployed on Operation Safari and was both Canadian deputy task force commander and deputy civil military coordination at force headquarters with the United Nations Mission in Sudan.

As a result of his work, he saved \$1.3 Million in Quick Impact Project funds and he secured valuable intelligence. He was awarded the Commanders Commendation from Canadian Forces Expeditionary Command.

Colonel Brennan served in The First Battalion, The Royal Newfoundland Regiment in positions from recruit private to commanding officer from 1987 to 2012.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** During 2006, he was the G3 for Land Force Atlantic Area Training Brigade Group. He has served as the assistant chief of staff for 37 Canadian Brigade Group and for the 5th Canadian

Army Division. He was commander of 37 Canadian Brigade Group from 2016 to 2018. He participated in two NATO exercises in Poland and Norway, as a Canadian Army brigade commander.

In order to provide sufficient time for orientation and transition, particularly with the outgoing Sergeant-at-Arms, who agreed to be available this week, the Commission recommended an acting appointment for Mr. Brennan so that he could start in the position on the first day of the sitting. So now we are looking to make this position permanent.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this, what I just read out speaks of an impeccable career, and credentials that are unmatched, I would say.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Having served in the military myself and been in the St. John's area when Mr. Brennan was working with the Reserves here, I can tell you if you speak to people who served with him, whether it's in the RNC or in the Canadian Armed Forces, they speak very highly and they will tell you that whatever he took on, he made it work and he made it work as good as it could ever work.

So I have zero issues with this appointment. I think it's a great decision and I think it gives us continuity. I think in the role of Sergeant-at-Arms, everyone in this House should feel safe with Mr. Brennan protecting this institution.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** I have to note that this went through the Independent Appointments Commission and that Mr. Brennan was the number one candidate – the Public Service Commission, sorry. It is, I think, the right decision, a good decision. He's more than capable, not just by his résumé, but by his previous record serving both his country and his province. So I hope that everyone

votes in favour of accepting Mr. Brennan in this role.

Now I'd be remiss if I didn't say we're going to miss Mr. Escott.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** He's been a delight in the House to all Members. He's proven time and time again his loyalty to the House of Assembly, to all the staff here and certainly all the elected Members. While the sceptre stayed shiny, sometimes the post don't stay as shiny as we'd all like to see them. But he hears that quite a bit. Maybe Mr. Brennan will do it differently. He's shaking his head.

One other thing about Mr. Escott that most people should know: an unwavering Leaf's fan – an unwavering Leaf's fan.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Anyhow, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. I think that the process was good and I think that we've made the right decision.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'll just take a minute to say a couple of words to thank the outgoing Sergeant-at-Arms and to welcome the incoming. The Government House Leader did an extensive CV, so I won't repeat any of that other than to say, no question, that you're certainly qualified for the position. I'm always pleased when I see that someone's spent time in Labrador because that's someone else in this Legislature that got a little bit of knowledge of the beautiful Big Land.

I want to say for all the people watching this morning – no, it's probably only the Linthornes, right, out in the Finance Minister's district. But when you come into this House and people would say what's the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms, I thought I would speak for a minute on the actual key responsibilities that they take on.

It's the security and safety of the House. They act as the primary security officer for the Legislative Assembly, the Members, the staff and the visitors. Most days it's lively, spirited debate; sometimes it can get a little raucous, and we know that there might have even been some altercations, way back in the day. I will say in my 13 years of serving the people of the province, I only got escorted out once by the Sergeant-at-Arms, so I'm trying to do better.

Another important part of the responsibility would be ceremonial duties, as we've seen: carrying the mace in the Speaker's procession and placing it on the table to signify that the House is now in session; and maintaining order – there have been times in this House we've had to close quickly through the years since I've been here, because we may have some visitors in the gallery that are not happy about different things. That is another role of the Sergeant-at-Arms, maintaining order and removing visitors that may disrupt proceedings and enforcing the rules in the gallery.

Of course, their role can come right down to managing the parking, Speaker, if we've got special events that are happening here. So I want to thank Mr. Escott for your time here, always a pleasure to be around, and I want to welcome and we look forward to having you protect us as we work together in this hon. House going forward for this Assembly.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

There's no doubt that Mr. Brennan is very qualified – maybe even overqualified – but there's an extensive background here – more qualified than me to be in this House of Assembly, I will say that. So no issue with the credentials, already acquitted himself with regard to even the smartness of the step, getting up with the mace and that compared to the previous person, but hey, you know.

The only thing against Mr. Brennan is that he is a Gonzaga graduate, whereas the former Sergeant-at-Arms and I and my brother across the way are Brother Rice graduates, so –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**J. DINN:** Okay, well, present company –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The other brother.

**J. DINN:** The other brother.

But we certainly are looking forward to it. As I know it's largely ceremonial, we had one person – I think it was the minister from Gander – talk about the appreciation for the ceremony. I think that's the one clear thing about the House of Assembly; it brings that respect to it. Hopefully, we don't need to actually intercede to fisticuffs across the aisle – not in my time, anyway, but we know that you're there, Sir.

As for the outgoing Sergeant-at-Arms – and if I can, Mr. Escott, I'll use Bob, because Bob and I went to school together, we graduated and we were in the same class at Brother Rice. I taught his son at Holy Heart who is now, I think, to the Bar and doing quite well in the legal profession.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** I worked extensively with his wife, Helen, at Holy Heart in setting up a radio station there. So intimately connected; I know they are good people; I know what they stand for; I know that the integrity of both these gentlemen is unmatched.

So congratulations, Mr. Brennan, on being nominated and I think, congratulations, Bob, on your retirement. I know you'll still be tuning in every now and again maybe from a warm destination, who knows?

I will say the one problem – I have to bring this up in the process. It's when we talk about an independent or merit-based – because there's no doubt about it, as I said, that the merits stand out, but the process here involved, at one point, the former Sergeant-at-Arms actually sitting in on the interview committee, interviewing his successor.

Now, I've sat on a number of national boards and hiring boards. It's the first time I've encountered anywhere the outgoing person has had direct say or questioning on the incoming.

I think, from here on in, whenever we talk about a truly independent process, we've got to make sure that it's not only merit-based but appears to be merit-based. That's my one issue with this process, in that if it's going to be truly merit-based or give the impression, then it's got to be free from any impugning of its independence and merit-base.

On that note though, again I'll go back, welcome aboard, Mr. Brennan. You can guarantee that with my brother on the other side, me on this side and the Member on this side here we'll be watching your every step and making sure that your shoes are shined, that you take the – I think it was, Bob, 11 steps up to the table and back. So we had that –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**J. DINN:** And a three-point turn. So far, you're doing that very well, I must say.

Thank you very much, appreciate it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers to the motion?

Seeing no further speakers, we call the question.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion has been carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day.

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

#### **Orders of the Day**

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

**L. PARROTT:** I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, the Address in Reply.

**SPEAKER:** Address in Reply has been called.

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** Thank you, Speaker.

It is times like this I'm often reminded of some advice that was given to me by a former 'Twillingater,' former mayor of Gander, Mr. Claude Elliott. Claude told me,

when you get up to give a speech, get up, say what you have to say, and sit down because nobody wants to hear you speak.

So I hope to honour Mr. Elliott today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to deliver my maiden speech with a sense of pride, humility and, I admit, a touch of disbelief. After the emotional rollercoaster of election night, watching the votes roll in, refreshing the votes results every few seconds and feeling my heart rate rise with every swing, I truly wasn't certain that I would have the privilege of standing here today; but here I am and I'll never take it for granted what it means.

I'm deeply honoured to represent the incredible people of Lewisporte - Twillingate.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** Speaker, to say election night was a nail-biter would be an understatement of the year. It was the kind of night that tests your nerves, your patience and the durability of the living room floor from pacing back and forth.

So with this, with total sincerity, I want to thank the former MHA Derek Bennett. Derek served the people of our district with dedication. He served the House as minister and as Speaker, and I want to respectfully acknowledge his contribution and tip my hat to him today.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** Speaker, standing in this Chamber gives us a rare opportunity to publicly acknowledge the people who saved our sanity, lifted us up and believed in us long before anyone else did.

To my daughter, Samantha, thank you for running my social media, for teaching me what buttons not to push on my cellphone.

To my son Mitchel, thank you for being my graphic designer and my unofficial late-night chef, making sure I'm fed on evenings when I come home running on fumes.

To my wife Susan, thank you for standing beside me when you weren't quite sure what you were signing up for. Thank you for finally agreeing to let me throw my hat into the political ring and for riding the ups and downs with grace, humour and more patience than I probably deserved.

To my brother, Peter, thank you for supporting me 100 per cent and, even more, being more honest than I really needed, and for telling me exactly what he wouldn't do for my election – he was not going to knock on doors. I appreciate you, Peter.

To my mother and father, you taught me what it means to listen, to be patient and to give back to my community. Those lessons shaped me more than anything else, and I stand here today because of the examples you set.

Speaker, I am a son, a husband, a father and now, with immense pride, the MHA for the ruggedly beautiful District of Lewisporte - Twillingate.

Growing up in Twillingate, my introduction to politics came from my father. Back in the '70s, we didn't have thousands of channels, streaming devices, YouTube; we had CBC and maybe NTV, and that depended on weather, the wind and the antenna. I often joke that my political interest began when Glenn Tilley delivered the news and Karl Wells had a moustache. Those moments exposed me to the world. They planted a spark.

Now, anyone who knew me back then probably would laugh at the idea of me standing here today. My early life was shaped by heavy metal music, hockey and snowmobiling; AC/DC and Metallica weren't just music, they were a lifestyle. Hockey

was my outlet for my teenage energy, which is probably the best way to describe it.

My goal in every season in hockey was to avoid winning the most sportsmanlike award and, I'm proud to say, I was consistently successful.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** And to my father, sorry about the broken goalie sticks. I cannot stress enough those sticks saved my hard life.

After high school, I took some time to figure out who I was. I ventured to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, a place where cold makes Newfoundland look like a tropical destination, but that life wasn't for me. My passion for automobiles was always there but, in the early 90s, during the cod moratorium and with so many retraining, getting into a trades program was nearly impossible.

So I joined the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves as a mobile support equipment operator. Those years taught me discipline, structure and an appreciation for service, but when a spot opened at the College of the North Atlantic for automotive repair, I knew it was time to begin my career I truly wanted. I respectfully transitioned out of the Armed Forces and dove into the automotive trades.

My career had many twists and turns and a whole lot of grease. I won the provincial Skills Canada Competition twice and represented Newfoundland and Labrador on a national stage and, eventually, built a career that took me from St. John's to Gander. I became a trained GM technician, a Ford master technician and, finally, a Honda platinum technician, and ranked among the top 10 in Atlantic Canada.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** Speaker, I worked right up until the writ was dropped, closing out a 25-year

automotive career that I am proud of, but, Speaker, that political spark never left.

For years I watched politics and believed politicians were larger than life. I didn't see myself as one of them but one evening in 2007 changed that. While living in Paradise, my wife left for work and I was performing my fatherly duties of trying to manage tub time, snacks and the worst ponytails ever created by human hands.

A politician knocked on my door. She looked at me; she looked at the ponytail situation and, without hesitation, she scooped up my daughter so we could talk. That moment showed me that politicians weren't mythical creatures; they're people – ordinary people trying to make a difference. That politician was the late Dianne Whalen.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** I owe her a tremendous thank you.

Over the years, my wife noticed a spark growing; she'd ask: Are you thinking about running? I'd say, yes, and immediately she would say: Not with small kids you're not. Fair enough.

Fast forward to 2021, the same question, same answer, except this time, she said go for it. Before she had time to reconsider, I was gone.

I attended AGM Zoom meetings. I learned everything I could from the caucus. Then life took a turn; cancer, not once, but twice. While those were some of the hardest moments in my life, they stand also strangely clarifying.

During my second battle, I had 38 treatments here in St. John's. One day after treatment, I walked into the House, sat in the gallery up there and watched the House operate, that lit a fire.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**M. BUTT:** As my colleague says: loves it.

I returned the next day and walked in, the entire caucus greeted me, invited me in. From that moment, I was hooked. Fast-forward to 2025, the election began. Early mornings, late nights, bitter cold, sweltering heat and every type of weather Newfoundland can throw at you and in between, I loved it, every second. I experienced a true spirit of Newfoundland and Labrador. Going door to door, I was offered breads, jams, lassie buns, tea, coffee. I even had a volunteer carrying an armful of rhubarb while knocking door to door.

I've heard real concerns: lack of health care, rising crime, affordability challenges. And no matter the community, the message was clear: People needed change. After an unforgettable election night, I stand here the MHA for Lewisporte - Twillingate, a district of over 25 communities and local service districts, home to more than 12,000 proud people. No matter their political views, I promise to work for them and give them everything I have.

Speaker, Lewisporte - Twillingate is a treasure. Icebergs, whales, puffins, museums, lighthouses, fishing, berry picking, delicious meals, craft beer, local wines, we have it all. Tourism is not only an industry for us; it's a lifeline. Last year, 25 per cent of all visitors to Newfoundland prioritized seeing icebergs, and Twillingate being the iceberg capital of the world delivered.

Between January and August, our district generated 11.7 million views across social media. The world is watching us. Our fishing industry is the backbone of many communities. Fishers deserve safer working conditions and compensation that reflect their critical role in our province. I will continue to advocate fiercely for them.

Health care remains one of the biggest concerns I hear daily. We need better

access, more services and long-term planning that truly meets the needs of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, I believe in the future of this province. I believe in our people. If we work with humility, honesty and determination, we will get Newfoundland and Labrador back on track, and that's why we're all here.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge the mayors, councillors, unincorporated community boards, staff, volunteers across my district – the folks who work tirelessly and without recognition – your commitment does not go unnoticed.

To the residents of Lewisporte - Twillingate, to my campaign volunteers, to the Premier and to the dedicated staff serving our province, thank you.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. PARSONS:** Speaker, it is with great humility and honour that I stand before you today to address this Assembly.

I was born and raised in Corner Brook. My father is from Curling. My mother came to Corner Brook early in life from Carbonear. Both my grandfathers worked at the paper mill. I enjoyed a privileged childhood, surrounded by family and friends in a safe community rich in sports, music and the arts. My parents focused, completely, on myself and my sister. I've always felt loved and supported.

Speaker, that privilege now extends to my children, Rosemary and Declan, who are

growing up in similar circumstances and as they transition from childhood to adolescence, I'm constantly filled with pride, optimism and excitement, seeing them become fully formed, empathetic, interested people. When I feel frustration and despair about the ills of society, they bring me hope. They remind me of all that is good in humanity and our fortunate circumstance living in this special place in the world.

My wife Carolyn has devoted her career to helping students navigate their university years while promoting and supporting Grenfell Campus of Memorial University as its registrar and director of student services. Like me, she has a love for music and the arts. She is the glue of our family and the love of my life.

I have a loving and supportive extended family, many of whom, including my aunt, Beverly Tetford and all the Buckles, who helped secure my election this fall.

I live in the best place in the best place in the world. The City of Corner Brook is my heart and soul. Just big enough to have excellent services and facilities, but small enough to feel safe and social, our little city has superior weather, vibrant artists and athletes and great access to the outdoors. I can't imagine a better place to live and raise my family.

Speaker, I say all this not just to brag, but to point out the intricate support networks and the wonderful places that make us who we are as Members of this Assembly.

Before becoming the Member for the District of Corner Brook, I was mayor of the City of Corner Brook for eight years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. PARSONS:** It was a very rewarding experience, Speaker. I learned a great deal about my community, about government and about the challenge of meeting citizens' needs in an environment of limited

resources. It gave me great empathy for the civil servants that work quietly behind the scenes, keeping our complex world running.

Our world is not black and white; it's shades of grey. There are no silver bullets for the challenges we face, and while it makes for great campaign material, let's not pretend there are easy solutions.

Take health care – health care is an extremely complex system that involves thousands of health care professionals and support staff. It utilizes very technical equipment and facilities with intricate, highly regulated procedures. Improving it takes years of continuous effort. It takes strategies that must live far longer than any term of government. It takes resolve that must endure news cycle after news cycle after news cycle.

People will always have dissatisfaction and distrust of government unless we are forthright and honest about the nature of our challenges. Our duty not only includes making good decisions, it requires a constant effort to help people understand our decisions and the complex systems with which we're entrusted to lead. So as MHAs what do we do?

On one hand, we are trying to help our individual constituents. We work daily to help those in our district overcome challenges dealing with our provincial government, helping facilitate communication, advocating in instances where discretion can solve their problems and listening to their ideas.

Speaker, I have constituents who are struggling financially, struggling to find housing; families seeking support to care for their children with disabilities, their children in mental health crisis; husbands desperately trying to get health care or medical transportation for their sick wives. It is draining, heartbreaking, frustrating work, but it is so important. There is no better

feeling than hearing thank you from a constituent that you were able to help.

On the other hand, we're also charged with meeting in this room to debate and decide the direction of Newfoundland and Labrador. Individually, we represent geographic districts of our province, the cities, towns and villages spread all across this vast territory with disparate interests, local economies, cultures and challenges. How do we best represent our districts in this room? Should we simply echo our constituent's opinions as if we're holding a plebiscite on each issue that comes before us?

The great 18th century British parliamentarian Edmund Burke thought long and hard about his role in parliament. He had this to say to his constituents upon his election as MP for Bristol in 1774, and I apologize for the dated language:

“Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

Now, Burke advocated for a type of representative government that was more than the results of a VOXM Question of the

Day, more than a referendum on Churchill Falls. Burke believed it was our job to listen to the opinions of our constituents but it was also important to use our judgment and our conscience to inform our vote in the House. Our constituents chose us and they can easily change their minds at the next election.

Speaker, I take great satisfaction in working to make Corner Brook better, and now to make Newfoundland and Labrador better. Despite years of political conflict around the council table and having recently witnessed the spectacle which is Question Period, I still feel the passion to solve our problems through politics; maybe I'm a hopeless romantic.

To borrow from Burke, once again: The House of Assembly is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but the Legislature is a deliberative assembly of one province, of one interest, that of the whole.

Speaker, despite the gulf that seems to exist sometimes, between this side of the House and the other, I will remain hopeful. I will talk to my colleagues across the aisle and look for intersection of common interest. I will argue vigorously and hold government to account, but I will also support and celebrate their successes when they align with my values.

I'd like to congratulate all the new Members of the House. I'm sure we're all drinking from the fire hose right now, but I know you're all as excited as I am. I hope we can work together in good humour for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for many years to come.

I'd like to thank my constituency assistant, Cassandra, for embarking on this new journey with me. You are the backbone of

my constituency work, and you have my full trust and confidence.

I'd like to thank my caucus colleagues for their warm welcome and support. There's a lot of new tricks this old dog has to learn so I appreciate the patience you are showing me. It feels really good to be part of this team.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. PARSONS:** Lastly, to the people of Corner Brook, thank you, once again, for putting your faith in me. I will continue to give you my best effort and undying appreciation. I'll see you at the Civic Centre, at school and at the grocery store.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** Kwe', teluisi Hal Cormier.

It's truly an honour to rise in this House for the second time as the Member for the beautiful District of St. George's - Humber.

Now, I know the district is long; I want to talk about it. It's like 270 kilometres, many hours of driving to get from my house to Codroy Valley and back again, but this district is scenic. It's beautiful. I welcome you all to come visit.

I was born and raised in Corner Brook, and I've lived in Pasadena since 2012. I didn't just move Pasadena, I truly joined a community – a community that continues to grow – and, during my campaign, I travelled many roads, knocked on many doors and I confirmed what I always knew in my heart, that the West Coast is the best coast.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** In 2017, I began my path in public service when I was elected councillor by the Town of Pasadena. As a town councillor, I was chair of public works and community safety and also recreation. Over the past decade, the Town of Pasadena served the surrounding communities in many ways, we grew and people just like me decided to make Pasadena their home.

Speaker, I worked 35 years at Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. I did many jobs and became an Ives certified industrial lift truck trainer. Just so everyone knows, I wasn't the first Cormier making paper in Corner Brook. I'm a third-generation paper maker.

My grandfather went to the mill in 1922-23, in the construction phase, and then took a job there in '25; retired in '49. My dad went there in 1940; retired in '84. For a couple of years, there was no Cormier in the mill. I went there as a summer student in '89 and '90 and a good family friend, the late Frank Sheaves, offered me a job and I said yes. I made an incredible career at Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

I was a union representative on the committee for occupational health and safety. The skills I learned on this job, and with the union help, guided me in public service life. Those skills were commitment to workplace safety, team development and responsible decision-making. The same commitment and dedication were present in my volunteer work. I served as president of the Marble Mountain Ski & Ride Club. I actively contributed to school councils and played a key role in triathlon committees in Corner Brook and Pasadena.

These experiences gave me a deep belief in supporting community events and promoting togetherness and wellness. It's the foundation of how you build a community and watch it prosper. Even during challenges times, you work together to find solutions.

Speaker, I want to thank my family. I was blessed to be born in the Cormier family. Being the son of Harold and Patricia Cormier, brothers to Keith, Terry, Kathy and Mary. Now I know all of you know one of those names. You probably heard from him once, maybe twice, maybe three times, but let me tell you, as a family, we can have opposing points of view. We can all be strong and hold firm on what that point is, but the biggest strength we have is the love that comes from family.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** Speaker, I would like to say how incredibly proud I am of my daughter, Anna Cormier. I've had the privilege of watching her grow from a determined, young competitive swimmer in a swimming pool, learning discipline, resilience and how to push through when your arms are tired and the finish line is far away, to now attending Dalhousie University, chasing her dreams with that same focus and determination.

As a parent, there's nothing quite like seeing your child set a goal and work tirelessly towards it. She reminds me every day that success isn't about shortcuts. It's about commitment, courage and showing up, even when it's hard.

Anna, I couldn't be prouder of the young woman you have become and I carry that pride with me into this House.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** And just remember, you will always be Daddy's little girl.

Speaker, I want to thank my partner, Amanda. Anyone who knows her, knows she's not political by nature but when I made the decision to step into this world, she stepped in right alongside me. She encouraged me when days were long, grounded me when things felt overwhelming and supported me in ways both big and

small that often go unseen. Politics may not have been a chosen path, but she walked it with me anyway.

Amanda, your strength, your patience and your quiet belief in me made this journey possible. I am deeply grateful for you. I would not be standing here today without your support and I can promise you this, no matter how lively debate may get in this House – and you witnessed that yesterday – I still know who has the final say at home.

To my friends and supporters, thank you for knocking on doors, making phone calls and putting up signs, reminding me, often, that a good sense of humour is not optional in politics, especially here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Around home, if you can't laugh at yourself, someone else will gladly do it for you.

Speaker, this moment is not lost on me. To stand in this House is both an honour and a reminder of the trust placed in all of us by the people we represent.

I thank the voters of St. George's - Humber for that trust and I assure every resident, those who supported me and those who did not, that I will serve this district with fairness, respect and an open mind.

Democracy is strongest when participation is high and voices are heard. I am grateful to everyone who engaged in this process – candidates, volunteers, election workers and community members who took the time to care about the future of this place we all call home.

I would like to acknowledge my colleagues in this House. While we may come from different backgrounds, regions and political perspectives, we share a common duty to act in the best interests of the people. I look forward to working collaboratively, respectfully, constructively with all Members, because progress is rarely achieved alone.

I also wish to acknowledge the staff of this House, whose professionalism and dedication ensure that our democratic institutions function effectively. Your work often goes unseen but is essential, and I know you had your work cut out trying to train me.

Today, I'm especially proud to acknowledge my Indigenous ancestry through my grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Prosper. Her life, her strength, her quiet resilience have shaped my understanding of family, responsibility and community. She carried knowledge, values and traditions that were passed down, not through textbooks, but through lived experience, through perseverance, humility and care for others.

Speaker, the connection is deeply personal to me. It reminds me that history is not abstract; it lives in families, it lives in stories and it lives in the land itself. It also reminds me that reconciliation is not a distant goal, but a daily responsibility that requires listening, respect and action.

I also acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this province whose relationship with the land extends far beyond recorded history. Your cultures, your languages, traditions continue to enrich our shared society. As legislators, we must ensure that our words match by meaningful efforts towards reconciliation, equity and mutual respect.

Speaker, none of us arrives in this place on our own. I stand here because of my family, my community and the people who shaped me along the way. Like many families in St. George's - Humber, mine is built on hard work, sacrifice and deep connections.

The district is not defined by a single town or industry; it is defined by people who understand the value of work, the importance of neighbours and the necessity of resilience. These communities have showed up for one another in times of celebration and in times of hardship. Whether it's through fishing, forestry, small

business, public service or volunteer work, the people of this district contribute quietly but significantly to the strength of our province.

Speaker, they are not looking for handouts; they are looking for opportunity, they are looking for respect and they are looking for a future. I cannot be prouder to stand here after last night's announcement by our Premier (inaudible). Thank you, Sir.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** St. George's - Humber is a district rich in history and character. It is a place where traditions matter, but so does adaptation, where people honour the past while understanding that the future demands innovation, co-operation and thoughtful leadership.

Rural and coastal communities face unique challenges: distance, access to service and demographic change; but they also possess unique strengths: ingenuity, self-reliance and strong social bonds. The voices of these communities must be heard clearly in this House. Decisions made here have real consequences for families, workers, seniors and young people trying to build their lives close to home, and I intend to ensure that those voices are not lost in the larger conversations.

The people of St. George's - Humber have shared their concerns with me clearly and consistently. They want reliable and accessible health care, especially in rural areas where services can be stretched thin. They want strong public education that prepares young people for the world ahead, allowing them to remain connected to their communities. They want economic opportunities that are sustainable, fair and rooted in local realities, opportunities that allow young families to stay, return and thrive. They want their seniors to be treated with dignity, supported by services that recognize their contributions and meet their

needs. Above all, Speaker, they want a government that listens.

I believe these goals are achievable when policies are guided by evidence, compassion and common sense. I did not come to this House believing that any one person has all the answers. I came here believing that leadership is about listening before speaking, understanding before judging and working together before drawing lines.

I believe good ideas can come from any side of this House; I believe disagreement does not have to mean disrespect; and I believe that public service should always be guided by integrity and accountability.

Speaker, I stand here today proud of my roots, mindful of my responsibilities and deeply honoured to serve. After speaking to my CA yesterday – I have to give a shout-out to my CA, Lenny Tiller, who's watching today at the office.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** I told Lenny I wasn't going to do it, but that office runs like a well-oiled machine and, Lenny, it's because of you.

Today, I carry with me the lessons of my grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Prosper, the strength of the people of St. George's - Humber and the belief that public service is at its best when it's grounded in humility, respect and purpose.

Mr. Speaker, as an Indigenous man, our stories are passed down, and I want to share with the House a story of my grandmother. When my grandfather and grandmother settled in Corner Brook, on the old house on Burke's Road, Grampy worked at the mill. It was not to be discussed outside the house about my grandmother's past, where she came from and who she was, in fear that he would lose his position at the mill.

This is how stories are passed down. I find it ironic that 100 years ago, 100 years from then, her grandson stands in this House, in this building, and speaks freely.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**H. CORMIER:** I would like say, Nanny, your voice is silenced no more. I look forward to the work ahead and contributing meaningful to this House on behalf of the people I am privileged to represent.

Thank you, Speaker.

Wela'lin.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and have a few words because it's always an honour to speak in this House and to speak on behalf of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands and the Corner Brook area.

I just want to thank the people of the Humber - Bay of Islands for their support and for putting their confidence in me, again, in representing them in the area and the issues that are concerning in the area. I always said, no matter what, with the Liberals, PCs or Independent, I'll work with anybody to get the things done that's needed for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Humber - Bay of Islands.

I've been very overwhelmed by a lot of the speeches that the people made in their maiden speeches. It's very touching. Keep that feeling. Keep the feeling that you're here for the people that you represent. Once you keep that feeling, once you know that that's your goal, you'll never ever lose

your seat and you'll never ever lose perspective of how much you're helping people in your district.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. JOYCE:** That's my only words to the people who've made their maiden speeches.

I'm just going to speak on something that is very dear to my heart: the radiation and the PET scanner out in Corner Brook. I know I wrote the minister, she came back, gave me the answer, which I knew all along was the true facts that it won't be possibly 2027.

Then NTV, I think, did reports on it, about it and the minister got criticized a bit, mainly from the Opposition here, the Liberal Opposition. So I went on *Open Line* and I defended her, because I thought and I really, truly believed that the information she was giving me was factual, which I knew that I could tell the people. So all this, over the years, yes, it's going to be next year – yes, it's going to be next year – and I knew the difference and all the times there were announcements that were made.

After I got the letter and seen on NTV, I went on *Open Line* and I defended the minister and the government for being upfront. I get a letter, signed by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair saying, oh, just for the record, here's a statement that was made in *The Telegram* a couple of weeks before the election, just so you can have it for your information. Okay –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Address the Chair.

**E. JOYCE:** No, you'll have your chance.

So I said now, here's the Leader of the Opposition, here's the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair writing me – both of them signed the letter and saying here's the information the next time you speak.

So I hauls out the file that I have. Here's the former Member for Corner Brook in 2024 saying it's going to be ready in 2026, which was false. Here was a minister of Health said Corner Brook didn't even need one. So was that false?

The Transportation minister – and I know people don't realize that I listen. In Estimates in 2024, you asked the minister of Health, because I was speaking so much about it in the House, about the PET scanner in Corner Brook and his comment to you was, I don't even know if they're going to get one. That was his comment in Estimates, and I have the Estimates. I have the letters from a minister of Health saying Corner Brook don't need one because Quebec only does one per two million, and here's the Member for Corner Brook stating that it's going to be 2026. So I get the letter, forget all that. But here are the true facts just before the election.

They're going to write me and tell me: believe this one but forget the other 10 or 15 statements that were made. I'll even tell you and even go further, Dwight Ball, everybody knows the differences me and Dwight Ball had. Dwight Ball was behind the radiation and PET scanner more than me. We went hand in hand to get the radiation and PET scanner. We stood together and, I believe and I'll say it here in this House of Assembly, that Dwight Ball was 100 per cent on bringing it forward and still is today; even forget our differences, I believe that he knew the need for it.

So what happened in 2021? In 2021, they came out and they put \$2 million into the hospital foundation saying: Yeah, we'll put it there.

Dwight Ball – give him credit – the media called him, he said: Up to 2021, at no time was I into any discussion about removing the PET scanner from Corner Brook. It was supposed to be opened the same time as the radiation so people wouldn't have to drive back into St. John's for an hour scan, for an hour procedure – that's done. So Dwight Ball put that in writing that he was not.

So I got to ask the question: the Member for Cartright - L'Anse au Clair and the Leader of the Opposition, you were in Cabinet when it was taken out. You were in Cabinet when they actually took out the PET scanner.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would ask the hon. Member to address the Chair, please.

**E. JOYCE:** Oh, I am – oh, sorry.

I'm just saying that those two Members were in Cabinet when they took out the PET scanner and went through the budgetary process; but I got to believe that all the statements that I have over the times, over the PET scanner, all the statements I had over the radiation unit, they were all false, but there's only one just before the election that was put out.

Now, the former minister of Health, I got to say, I respected her. She was great to deal with, I can tell you that right now. She was prompt; she was always open for discussion. I had a lot of respect for her, I got to say. In my opinion, she was a person who you could talk to about issues of health in Corner Brook, and I got to give her credit for that. I do have a lot of respect for her – I did – and I still do have a lot of respect for her, because I feel she took her job seriously as a minister of Health.

But she's not here now and the people in the district chose the new Member and that's the way (inaudible) –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. JOYCE:** – and that’s the way the people decide, but while the former Member was there as the minister of Health, she was great to deal with, I have to say.

I just want to say, stand up for the government itself for being upfront and honest, because I’ve been fighting for this. We started this journey in 2011, about the radiation and PET scanner in Corner Brook, and I refuse to give up, I refuse to let it go and I refuse to get a letter saying: here’s the one you should believe, now forget the other 10 or 15 statements. Forget the statement where a Member said I took it out in 2016. We never even had a budget in 2016 – oh, I took it out in 2017.

I took it out in 2017, and that’s when we just started designing the hospital in 2017 but, here’s the thing, a certain Member, the Member for Cartwright - L’Anse au Clair, was on and said, yes, there’s a space for it; but what they forgot to say, there was no engineering done on it. There was no electrical done. There was just an open space that, some time along the way, there’s going to be one there.

Yet, there was never ever a decision made, and they put \$2 million in there. That PET scanner is still not purchased. It’s on their purchase order; the \$2 million that the Hospital Foundation – it’s still in the Hospital Foundation, because you haven’t paid for the PET scanner yet because it hasn’t been delivered. I just want to put that out there for the record.

Anybody here who wants to stand up and try to write me and tell me about the PET scanner and wants to give me more information about this PET scanner, you better know what you’re talking about; because, I can tell you, when I see people going through radiation, driving in here in the middle of the winter to get a scan and you’re trying to take this here and play politics with it again, you’re doing it to the

wrong guy. You’re doing it to the wrong guy, and 75 per cent of the people of the Humber - Bay of Islands think I am the right guy to bring that forward, and I will bring it forward and I make no bones about it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. JOYCE:** I tried on many occasions to work with the Liberal government to get this done – I tried.

I tried to work with them. The former mayor of Corner Brook knows how many letters I sent, how many times that I pushed for it, how many times I was on *Open Line*, how many times was I trying to get information on it and, each time, information wasn’t forthcoming because it’s back on me what I did, which is all false – which was all false.

I’ll say it again in this House of Assembly, until that PET scanner is up and running in Corner Brook, I will speak on the regular basis in this House of Assembly about it.

I said to the Premier and I said to the Minister of Health, let’s be honest with the people because, when I spoke about it on *Open Line*, people were calling me: but we though we had the PET scanner but we had no staff? Well, we didn’t know we were getting the PET scanner anymore. That was the issues that was being raised during and after the elections.

When the Minister of Health and Community Services wrote me and told me: Here’s the facts – which I knew because I spoke to officials in St. John’s on it. When she put it in writing and I put it out to the public that here are the facts, I just thank her for her honesty. I thank the Premier for his honesty, because I can tell you that he heard more than once about me speaking about the PET scanner, and he said, when I get in, we’ll work on the PET scanner and I make no bones about it.

So when I get this letter telling me: here’s the information for when you speak again,

you should know from here on in – the minister put something out in The Evening Telegram – but forget the other seven or eight statements that were false about the PET scanner; this is the one. They were all false, but not one of them stood up. When the Minister of Health, back in 2021, stood up and said: Corner Brook doesn't need a PET scanner, who stood up? No one.

Who stood up when the Minister of Transportation and works, in his comments – your comments were – that the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands is always talking about it. He won't stay quiet about it. You asked that question in the Estimates House for the people of Corner Brook, and I have the copy of the *Hansard* for Estimates that I saved, and then, the Minister of Health at the time said we don't even know if Corner Brook is getting one. So is that true? Which one will I believe? Which one will I tell the people is true?

So if the Leader of the Opposition wants to tell me which one I'm going to believe, just tell me, because the five or six statements that I got were false. So I could show the people of Humber - Bay of Islands right now and the people of Corner Brook and people of Western Newfoundland – this is not just a Corner Brook thing or a Humber - Bay of Islands thing; this is a West Coast thing, and people from Labrador will also be using it.

If you're going to have a situation with people, especially with their health, be honest with them. That's all I ask. If it can't be done in 2027, because I know it has to be certified and I know we have to find a way to get the isotopes over to Corner Brook – I know all that. If it's going to be delayed, let's tell the people that it's going to be delayed. But, right now, it's on track for 2027, which I knew all along, and the minister responded in the letter. The Premier called me personally and told me and I knew what it was.

But this stuff of dragging it on and dragging it on and dragging the former premier into it, Dwight Ball, who, I'll give him credit again, stood his ground and said, no, up to 2021, he never had any discussions of taking out the PET scanner from Corner Brook, which was supposed to be operational the same time as the radiation unit. So Dwight Ball was behind this, with me, right from day one, from 2011, right up to now because he seen the suffering of people.

I'm going to go back, Mr. Speaker, if I'm allowed, to 2014, there's another person that was part of the radiation and the PET scanner, I personally don't think he gets enough credit, it was Tom Marshall, Premier at the time. What happened, there was a dispute with some people in his party about this. Every time I asked a question, the answer came out, it wasn't correct. I'd go behind the screen and show them the answer. Then finally I said to him, I said: Premier, here's what you should do, if people over on your side don't think that one bunker is going to be sufficient, can sustain it in Corner Brook, why don't you call Sydney, Nova Scotia and call PEI? They started out with a single bunker, call them.

To the credit of Tom Marshall, the former premier, the PC Premier I might add, who worked with us on that, he called these two directors from Sydney and PEI. The Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador picked up the phone and phoned them, asked them questions, they verified everything: how many patients they had, they even had to put in a second bunker, for a second unit, because of the demand, especially in Nova Scotia. I'm not sure about PEI. The premier at the time, Tom Marshall – and I thanked him on numerous occasions – came back to his government, made a tiny Cabinet shuffle, came out with a \$500,000 study, which I already knew because I had the work done, but he wanted it verified, so he could lay down why Corner Brook should have a radiation and a PET scanner in Corner Brook.

Once that study was done, it was just finished. Everybody knew then that everybody was on side. The PC Government, the Liberal Opposition was on side. That's how the radiation and the PET scanner started in Corner Brook and got the validity to move on, it's because Tom Marshall and that \$500,000 study. He don't get credit enough for that, the work that he did for the people up in Corner Brook, in the Bay of Islands.

So I just want to put that on the record also because that's how well we worked together and that's how well we should all work together when it's coming for the health and for the betterment of people out on the West Coast. I have no problem saying that and I'll say it again a hundred times, that Dwight Ball and Tom Marshall were big – and I can't forget the hospital committee. The hospital committee were a bunch of union guys who got together and started in 2007 for a new hospital, and I could tell you, they didn't give up. Israel Hann, Gerald Parsons and all the boys, they didn't give up. They stood by it right from day one and they're still at it now for the PET scanner.

So this was not just me and Dwight Ball, as the Opposition, criticizing. This was myself and Dwight Ball who finally worked with the government to say, what do we need, meetings with the hospital action group to bring it together and it was done.

So please don't go sending me letters trying to give me information on what's happening with the PET scanner. Just don't do it because I'll stand every time in this House and show it wrong. If I knew I was going to speak this morning, I would have brought over the documents, which I have, and I would table them. I would table them.

One was 2026 it's going to be open; one we didn't need it; another one said we're not sure if we're going to have it; another one saying, oh, we can't get the staff for it. I would table the documents.

So please don't criticize me for standing up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially the people on the West Coast in Humber - Bay of Islands.

I just want to say one more thing. This is for the Minister of Health and the Premier. When that hospital opened, there was a backlog in emergency. Absolutely, no doubt, okay. No doubt. What was taken out of that part of that hospital, there's supposed to be bungalows built, or some extension, because we knew – well, I knew in 2018, up to 2018 – I knew there was up to 65 to 70 long-term care patients in acute care beds in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital. We knew that if we opened a hospital with the same number of beds, when you move those numbers of long-term care patients, who should be in long-term care, into acute care beds, there was going to be a backlog.

Somewhere – somewhere – from 2021 to 2025, there was nothing done about the long-term care patients that are moved into acute care beds and that's why there's such a backlog. One of the reasons why there's such a backlog in the hospital is because there are no beds. The plan put them into long-term care facilities or units like the bungalows was taken out for some reason.

So that's why, Minister – and I know the government put in 45 beds now – that is why we've got to find a way for another 45 at the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital so that we can clear up acute care beds which is taken up now by long-term care patients.

Just for the record, myself or Dwight Ball were not in the Cabinet when that decision was made also. The same with taking out the PET scanner, we were not in the Cabinet as it was done.

So if the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and the Leader of the Opposition, who was in Cabinet at the time, wants to explain that, please go ahead. I'm sure the people

of Corner Brook and the Humber – and I'm sure the former mayor who is a colleague now would love to know. You've been hearing it many times out in Corner Brook when you were the mayor about the backlog in Corner Brook and because the number of long-term care patients in acute care beds and about the radiation and the PET scanner in Corner Brook. So we'd love to know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry to take up the time but I just had to get that straightened up in this House.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that we now adjourn Address in Reply.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved that we now adjourn Address in Reply.

**L. PARROTT:** Seconded by the Deputy Premier.

**SPEAKER:** All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** Against?

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 5.

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Public Procurement, that Bill 5, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It's been moved and seconded that An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2." (Bill 5)

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I would ditto the previous speaker before me when he complimented everyone on the maiden speeches. I think on both sides of the House, everyone was very captivating. If you think of the diversity in the House and the different backgrounds and the opinions, it's what makes this Chamber so special. People from different backgrounds, different beliefs, we all come together and make decisions that would be the best for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would genuinely say that it's the first session that I've attended where we've had maiden speeches. We've had some. I know my colleague had one, but having so many was, I think, very rewarding for the public to see, and I think it adds to a lot of the credibility of this Chamber. But they were all fantastic, so congratulations to all of you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** When I stand up, I'd often acknowledge viewers in the District of Bonavista, and I know that was in my previous time, but I know that the Opposition House Leader referenced in the

District of Bonavista the Linthornes. I just wanted to update the House because I've mentioned them many times, and they were avid viewers of the House of Assembly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Linthorne passed away in 2025, and saddened to say – while we miss him, I just wanted to inform the House, going forward, that we know the team of Mr. and Mrs. Linthorne, we've lost one of them, but I know that Mrs. Linthorne is, I'm sure, watching today and –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** – and we certainly send along collectively our condolences.

Mr. Linthorne was a very noble man, and I know very opinionated. He was an honourable person; he was a sealer with the Crosbies back in the day, and he enjoyed talking about his experiences on the ice, sealing, and they were very enjoyable. But he was a very passionate individual, so I just wanted to inform the House of that.

In the previous government, when the hon. Tom Osborne – which I think I'm allowed to use his name now, Speaker, that he's retired, and he was then minister of Health. He retired on one Friday afternoon. I watched it on the media. But Friday morning, I was surprised that I got a call from that same Member. I probably didn't share it with my colleagues at any point in time, but I had a call early Saturday morning. When I knew he was calling me, I was a little surprised.

But one message that I took from that, he had stated that if your time ever comes to be over on the government side of the House, never lose track that you've got 40 districts that you represent. You've got 40 districts to represent, all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would think that we will be a government that will make sure that we represent every district well and, as far as the districts that

may be represented by those on the Opposition side, then I would say to you, we're here to make sure that we represent all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** You may not be fully aware of it, you may not have heard all three, but we ran on three pillars, our platform, when we ran. We ran on better health care, lower taxes and safer communities. Bill 5 that we're going to present now to you, and would welcome discussion on, is part of the affordability, the lowering taxes, for all 40 districts and the people in our province. Those were the three.

The Member for Corner Brook just spoke a little while, and I acknowledge, great address, but he mentioned in it about people's struggle. They struggle in all 40 districts. Our goal, as good governance, is to make sure that we assist; where the need arises, we assist and do our best.

Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition had mentioned collaboration, not competition. I state the Leader of the Opposition because, I would think in the maiden speech for St. Barbe - L'Anse au Clair, I think my hon. Member had mentioned the same thing – she did. Then, the Member for Burgeo - La Poile referenced it – maybe not in those words that were used, but generally the same thing – and I would think collaboration is paramount.

I believe it, and I would think a challenge that we would have, or any government any time, is to make sure that we collaborate to the best that we possibly can. Listen to the people; listen to all 40 within the House, and make sure that when we do something and pass legislation, we do it right – we do it right.

Seniors came up yesterday in questions and it was mentioned about the seniors. Well, we've all got vested interested to make sure that we do well with our seniors.

We value what they've stood for, and we want to make sure that we will look after our seniors.

It was mentioned yesterday, I think by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, for seniors to age with dignity in their optimal place that they would desire. I think that's important and, I think as we roll on with this sitting of the House, you'll see a lot of these things that will come into place and be addressed.

I would ask the colleagues across – our colleagues – that when we roll out this legislation, part of the debate is that you're going to challenge us on what we present. If you think it falls short, then you can feel free to mention that and that is what the House does. We challenge and, in fact, that's your job, to challenge what we do.

We talked about listening to the people and, in order to do that for budget 2026, we put out a pre-engagement initiative. We wanted to hear from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador what their views were. I would like to say that we received more feedback this year than what we did in the previous three years combined on engageNL.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** For that, we're very proud because we think that we've asked and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have stepped up to make sure that they would give us their opinion.

This bill, Bill 5, comes under lower taxes. It falls under affordability. We all agree that affordability is one that we ought to be focused on in the House.

Affordability doesn't come down with one cost-saving measure – not just one. It is a composite of what you do to bring down affordability. We know that we have, on one hand, revenue; we have, on the other hand, expenditures and we know that we've got to balance that out. That's where we are.

We've got to try to balance out the revenue. If you had more revenue, maybe at that point in time you could offer more programs to help people out. I think we would probably all agree with that.

I mentioned yesterday that last year we had an 8 per cent increase in food bank usage; that's large. That's large, and what they averaged out was 15,400 people a month that access food banks. Of those, what the literature would say, 4,700 were under the age of 18. That's a startling figure, so whatever measure we do, we've got to make sure that, in the measure we've got, we are going to try or we are going to make a difference in the affordability for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador in all 40 districts.

The Premier was on last week, and the Premier stated about Newfoundlanders ought to have the ability to be able go out and catch cod for their supper table. They ought to be able to do it when they're able to do it, when the conditions are safe; not to be restricted to say here is when you can go, here is when you can't. They ought to be able to do it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** I've used the names before, Winston and Ella Penney. Winston was fishing his whole life, and one thing he liked to be able to do was go out and catch a fish to bring home for the supper table like he always did.

Now I would ask: Would that not be an affordability issue? Would that not be an affordability issue that Winston and Ella Penney in Cannings Cove can go out and catch cod for their supper table? I use that as an example of the myriad of stuff that can affect affordability.

Some of our maiden speeches that were delivered here talked about the food sources that were at the table. My hon. Member here had stated so well what

provisions that the family provided in her home in St. Anthony. Think about it, it was off the land. The provisions that provided for the family were provisions off the land and the water. Many places in rural Newfoundland would still have their provisions from the land and from the water, and if we put restrictions on them – unable to go out to catch a cod – I think that falls under affordability. I believe it to be true.

This Chamber, we can unite to say that we feel strongly about certain things, and with our federal members, then it's maybe something that we can stand together on many issues, and that may be one that we certainly could do. So we know that affordability is not just about cutting taxes, there are lots of things that we can do in that.

The Opposition lots of times would challenge us and say, well, how are you going to pay for all the things in your platform? We heard in the media, people interviewing and saying: boy, you're really throwing things out.

I never heard one comment on which one you would disagree with. Which item on the platform would you disagree with? Which one?

So whenever we raise, and what we do in the budget, what comes out, it would be nice to know which one you disagree with.

But we've got revenues and we've got expenditures, and I would think we were clear in the fact that nobody stated that everything that was in the platform was coming in the 2026 budget. Nobody ever said that. That's not in our platform. Nobody ever stated that, boy, they're all coming full bore in the spring of 2026.

Our goal is to make sure we provide each and every one of them, and I think the Premier and his full team are committed to make sure that we deliver on them.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** One of my first duties as Minister of Finance was to go to meet and sit around the table with my colleagues from the other provinces, and I enjoyed the conversation; I enjoyed the debate that occurred around the table.

So during lunch one day, Minister Champagne had greeted me before we started, and we had talked. He talked about he was going to address the affordability crisis and talk at our meeting. He said, we may not have an affordability crisis – that's what he said – we may have a productivity crisis. I thought that very different, but I tell you what he had said to me.

When lunchtime came, the Governor of the Bank of Canada walked into the proceeding, in the room – large room, large number of people – and we talked. I reminded him that the federal minister of Finance had said we may not have an affordability crisis, but we've got a productivity crisis. Yes, yes, he said, I'm going to speak to that, which he did.

Interestingly enough, it was as simple as we have got to increase our production, our industry in order to make sure that we better provide for the residents of our province. I would say our goal from day one – and the Premier can contend to what he's done; I've been witnessing much of it with the Minister of Energy and Mines – we've started on our productivity journey when we got in: Bay du Nord. We know that we had the celebration last night with that. That will generate revenue for the province.

Question us on the point of how much, what are other factors, and that is your job to do so; but our job and our goal is to make sure that we raise the productivity, increase the income to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Don't mistake that we are only oil and gas. We are not only oil and gas.

Oil and gas is a foundational part of what we have, but we have many other resources that would be in this province that we need to tap into. We'll hear, I would think in this sitting, that we're going to have some mining announcements or directions that we can pass on.

The Premier stated that the Churchill River will be developed. Green energy – we've got a lot of it; we just want to make sure that we get our correct share and it does the best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** That's where we are.

So by saying that we don't have an affordability crisis, I know that doesn't sound right because 40 of us sitting in this House would say we've got to make sure that we look after those who would be struggling. Every one of us, 40 of us, agree. Call it a crisis if you wish. I would agree with Tiff Macklem, Governor of the Bank of Canada and I would agree with Minister Champagne when he says we have a productivity crisis.

Thirty-four rare critical minerals listed in Canada, we've got 27 of them, I think, in –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No, we got 34.

**C. PARDY:** We've got 34 of them, better again –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Out of 50.

**C. PARDY:** Out of 50 – 34 out of 50.

What I would say to you is that we've got lots and lots of opportunity and we don't mean that when we get a lot of resources, financial resources into our coffers, that we do not continue to spend smarter. I say that term: to spend smarter.

In 2016, when the previous government came into power, there were 300 new taxes and fines that were levied. I'm not sure if a lot of people were aware of it. That's a significant amount of taxes. It didn't contribute to affordability. It may have had the opposite effect.

The Premier had stated that we're going to review every one of our fees and fines, which we've already commenced. Will that come out in the 2026 budget? No, because of the short window that we've got, but we are committed to making sure that every fine and fee that's levied by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will be reviewed.

As the Premier stated, if it doesn't have value and does not support residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, then we need to question as to what the value would be and whether it should continue to exist. Make life more affordable. That is what we desire.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** So today, Bill 5, Speaker, we are introducing amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act* – our first bill that we roll out, and we're pleased to do so. This will reduce the provincial gas tax from April 1 onward. We are into March; March 31 the gas tax was scheduled to hike, to go up. That is what the legislation states. We had stated in our platform that we will make the reductions permanent.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** These amendments, Mr. Speaker, will ensure that the tax rate does not revert to 14.5 cents per litre for gasoline and 16.5 cents a litre for diesel on April 1, 2026. The reduction means that residents will continue to see prices at the pump at 8.05 per litre lower, including the HST.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Many people are wondering now, where do we stand in Newfoundland and Labrador with our gas tax. I'm sure everyone is wondering where we are. We are number one. We are the lowest. This act will keep it beyond the end of this month. It will be enshrined that we maintain it going forward. It doesn't revert to what it did. We are 7.5 cents tax on gasoline, the lowest in the country, followed, number two, by PEI, 8.4 cents a litre; then third, Ontario, nine cents; fourth, New Brunswick, 10.87.

So again, 7.5 cents a litre. By making this legislative change and keeping our gas tax rate among the lowest in the country – the lowest – we are demonstrating our commitment to the residents of all 40 districts in the province. We understand, as we've just spoken about, or I have, the ongoing pressures caused by the rising cost of living, and we are taking action to ease the burden, starting with the first bill and continuing with the bills that will follow.

To restate, we campaigned on permanently reducing the tax and here is our first opportunity to stand and say we will honour that commitment, and I would think that the House would be in favour of the same. To end, Mr. Speaker, it brings us closer to a stronger, more resilient Newfoundland and Labrador for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for bringing this forward. We certainly will be supporting this legislation today. I do want to talk about gas tax and the price of gas and a lot of things to do with the gas taxes, when I speak today, Speaker.

When I was elected in 2019, the provincial gas tax was 16.5 cents a litre, Speaker. Then in November 2020, it was lowered to 14.5 cents a litre. Then June 2, 2022, our government, when we were in government, we lowered it to 7.5 cents a litre, Speaker. So that has been in place ever since.

Part of the reason why we didn't make it permanent, Speaker, was because there was a federal backstop. We were afraid of the federal backstop for the carbon tax. So there were discussions happening between the provincial government and the federal government with the carbon tax.

So this is the right thing to do. I give the government credit for this. The gas prices have been lowered since 2019. As I mentioned, Speaker, they were 16.5 cents when I was elected and in 2022, we did make them 7.5 cents a litre, as the government is making them permanently, by getting rid of the – we had a sunset clause, absolutely, Speaker. We were afraid that the federal government would kick in their carbon backstop, and the carbon tax is no more.

But I think when we talk about the price of gas, as the minister mentioned, there are multiple factors. One is when the price of gas goes up, people in the province pay more at the pumps. This gas tax gets added on at the pumps. But, also, when the price of gas goes up, the Treasury gets a lot more money, Speaker. So it's kind of good and bad. When the price of gas goes up, it's really good for the Treasury, Speaker, but it's really bad for people's pocketbooks. And the gas tax is where it hits people in their pocketbooks.

I was in charge of gas prices previously, Speaker, and the Member for Humber - Gros Morne is now in charge of gas prices. I wish you all the best in those endeavours.

So the price of gas is very complex, Speaker. There are different components. The maximum price today is 147.4 cents a

litre and, of that, 36.73 cents are taxes; the retail markup is 14.28 cents tax; the wholesale markup is 15.65 cents; the carbon price adjustment, which is still to meet the federal government's Clean Fuel Regulations, Speaker, that still remains on the price of gas of 5.40 cents, and that's set by the Public Utilities Board; and the benchmark price is 75.38 cents.

That is the price on the Avalon today, the maximum price. There are 16 pricing zones across the province. For example, Churchill Falls today, the maximum price allowable for self-service is 157 cents, so almost 10 cents more than here in St. John's.

So the price of gas is really complex, and I guess I just want to make sure that everyone understands that this change does not reduce prices, it maintains status quo and it does ensure that people can understand that the price will not go up in the future – absolutely, the price of the provincial gas tax will not go up.

So we have some more questions in Committee, Speaker. I do want to mention, the Member talked about revenue. Revenue is, obviously, an incredibly important part of the province's Treasury and I would be remiss if I did not plead with the Members opposite and the ministers in the government to continue their negotiations with Churchill Falls as expediently as possible.

The Minister of Finance, I'm sure he would love to be having another billion dollars this April for this year and backdated to last year, as was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding. A billion dollars coming to the Treasury in this month would allow them to do a lot more; would allow them to fulfill more of their promises; would allow them to significantly impact the financial situation, the affordability for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians across the province.

I plead with the government –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Was it in your fiscal forecast? I don't think so.

**S. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I wasn't responsible for the fiscal forecast. I can't speak to the fiscal forecast; I was not the minister of Finance.

But, Speaker, I would just plead with the government – as the Minister of Finance mentioned, they want to find ways to increase revenue. We have an MOU on the table that is there, I plead and implore you to progress with that, or if you can get better, that would be amazing.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**S. STOODLEY:** I plead and implore you to progress with the MOU because we need that revenue. Your grandchildren, Speaker, the Members in the government, their grandchildren, need the revenue from that Churchill Falls deal, and I implore them to continue. That's going to allow the government to fulfill more of their promises, but they need to do that, Speaker.

So we are pleased to support the gas tax today, to making it permanent, and, as I said, it has been this amount since June 2, 2022.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's kind of hard to speak against a tax break when we proposed several of our own; however, I do want to talk a little bit about, I guess, how we measure affordability.

I heard the Minister of Finance talk about a productivity crisis. I think it's still very much an affordability crisis. You know, I was looking at an article here – and how do we

measure affordability? How do we measure wealth and so on and so forth?

There's a quote here from the Centre for Future Work. We use GDP to measure the wealth of our province. Now, I guess, that it's interesting here, Newfoundland has one of the highest GDP because of our oil production, yet we have, according to this: wages and incomes in the province are still below the national average. So high GDP but wages that are low. We have lower taxes, but we have lower incomes, yet we're supposed to be a have-province.

I guess the best thing is the person who is often spoken about efficiency and who was put in charge of it in the United States. If Elon Musk were to walk into this room, the average income of everyone in this place would rise significantly, even though our incomes here would not change. So I guess when we look at productivity here in the province, let's not get swayed with this. There is an affordability issue.

We heard in this House, from the then Opposition, that basically inflation, food prices were being driven up by the carbon tax, by the gas tax. Both have been removed and, guess what, food prices are still going through the roof.

Again I go back to the constituency meeting at Froude Avenue, and the number of people there, as I said, on some form of fixed income, pension or otherwise, and the fact that they knew the comparative prices of meats and vegetables at the various supermarkets. That speaks to the fact that it's still unobtainable, whether they can even afford to eat meat or even a lower cut of meat.

I was at Sobeys, and I watched this young fellow – he was maybe in his late 20s, early 30s – walking out of the supermarket with a huge package down his pant leg, which I can only assume was some food product, and I had the choice, you know, I can turn him in; but the man looked gaunt, I let him

go. The fact is, for many people, food is already expensive.

I referenced the fact that the \$30 bi-weekly supplement to help people – dietary supplement – for those who are diabetic. Think about it, what can you buy that's affordable for \$30? I walked out of a supermarket with a bag that came to, it was \$95 – \$95 dollars in a bag. Now you know what? I'm going to buy what I'm going to buy. I'm privileged. I have the income. I don't even think of it. I'm going to buy it, but for many people, it's down to those pennies.

I've seen things at gas pumps lately, even with the reduced price in gas tax, that I haven't seen in many years. I used to do it when I was first driving. You see there that people have, obviously, spent \$5 or \$10 on gas. They're not filling up; even with the reduced gas price, they're not filling up.

Oil prices are probably going to go up a lot higher now regardless of the gas tax, because of the war that we're seeing – the expanding war in the Middle East – but, with all the reductions in taxes, obviously, for a lot of people, life is still unaffordable.

Earlier this week, I had an email from a lady about the new ambulatory health hub on Stavanger Drive, and her issue, she spent \$47 in a taxi to get there; obviously, she does not drive – \$47 in a taxi to get there. Her issue was, there are many of those who cannot afford that, and her issue had to do with the Metrobus and public transit. The nearest bus stop was at Aberdeen Avenue, which meant – and we've done a little bit of math – anywhere from 100 metres to 400 metres away. Great, I'll walk it.

Anyone that's been down to Stavanger Drive, it's still a pretty busy place; but if you have mobility issues, if you're waiting for some sort of hip surgery or a hip replacement, then it is a significant challenge and a barrier. It is an affordability issue. You either pay for a cab – which you can't – or hopefully maybe you can have

someone to drive you down there. If you don't have that family support, it's coming out of pocket. There's inadequate public transit.

Now, I remember growing up with us – and my brother will probably attest to this – our mother worked at home looking after us. I don't like using the word “stay-at-home mom,” because that was part of the economy. She worked, dammit, worked very hard raising seven of us. I remember, like, when it came to – I don't know how. We had three children in our family, as does my brother, and I can tell you, I often wonder – I had a new appreciation for my mother and father in raising the seven of us on one salary.

But I remember the things that were done, I guess, to make life more affordable. My father worked with the railway – our father worked with the railway – and, of course, every now and again, you'd go to combines. So what a combine was is that there were damaged goods that were in transport and the railway workers and family had a lottery draw and you could go in and pick up a variety of food stuffs and everything else there – it's like wholesale; better than wholesale prices. Like Costco, only better.

So we'd get there and we'd get the big, I guess, trolley and you'd go around and you'd load it up and so on and so forth, and that would supplement the income, but I can tell you, I mean, I had more powdered milk, puffed wheat, puffed rice, God knows what else, and there are some things that we grew up with that I would never eat again, not because they're good, but – like, mock chicken, I will never eat again. Every lunch at high school was mock chicken. I don't know what was it was in it, but I knew the word mock.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It wasn't chicken.

**J. DINN:** Mock chicken – I don't think there was any chicken in it, not that I know of.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Chicken by-product.

**J. DINN:** I don't know if there was even chicken by-product in it, Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Lots of mayonnaise.

**J. DINN:** Yeah, it's amazing what you can do with mayonnaise and how that covers up the taste.

Anyway, my point is that there were expenses at that time. So where am I going with this because it comes down to –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** I'm getting hungry.

**J. DINN:** I'm glad you're getting hungry. Unfortunately, talking about mock chicken, now mind you, too, we had other good stuff such as bologna, liver, the whole bit, but it was good – I don't want to give the impression that we went without because we didn't, but my parents knew how to stretch a dollar and raise seven of us and we've all gone on to receive a post-secondary education and, of that, I'm extremely proud of them for the work that they did.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** I guess where I'm going with this is that while we're talking about the lower of taxes, it's great. It means for me when I go to the pump, I'm going to paying less; but for the person who does not drive, who can't even afford to own a vehicle, let alone drive, it's obviously not have the impact that we hope for, we've got to be going beyond that.

So for those who do not drive, there's got to be some way to get people around, affordable public transit, and not just in the metro area. I've talked to I don't know how many people, whether they are newcomers to this province or they're people who would live out in places like Conception Bay South, if there was an affordable public transit system and reliable that they could use.

A lot of people are confined to living in St. John's because there's no way to get back and forth. If you have a job, you have to either live in St. John's or you need a car. If you travelled anywhere else – and I'm always impressed with Ottawa, a much bigger city, I realize that, but the transit system, you can get by without a vehicle.

While we're talking about the reduction of the gas tax and the sugar tax and so on and so forth, what are the other ways in which to make life more affordable for people? Public transit – I can tell you, too, the sugar tax if it had gone towards, I guess, making food more affordable, I could have supported it in some way. But I will tell you this, even with the sugar tax, a two-litre Pepsi was still cheaper than a two litre of milk. That was the issue. There were people who, their children have dropped – I know in one family, on income support, a child going to university had to drop out when it came to the affordability issues.

I think also, going out to catch cod, no problem with that. However, I've been out to catch cod and it still requires me getting to the boat or someone having a boat to get out there. I go salmon fishing, but I can tell you that that salmon that I have in the freezer is probably the most expensive salmon you'll ever eat. If it's about food, I understand that. So –

**P. DINN:** I've never seen any of that.

**J. DINN:** You know what? I'll save you a fin.

I will say this, look, it comes down to, seriously, folks, we put forward a number of resolutions when it came to this. We do need to start looking at a minimum wage that is a livable minimum wage, and we've got to start working towards that. But that also means, how do we ensure that small businesses, on the other hand, are not the ones bearing the brunt? You can't be profitable on the backs of your workers, but you've also got to make sure that small

businesses have this financial support, whether it's in reduced taxes themselves.

I'm not worried about the Costcos; I'm not worried about McDonald's and so on. They're multi-national. They're going to absorb the cost anyway. By the way, Costco pays its people very well. I had a former student there I taught, they even had the ability for management training, going back to school, so on and so forth. They have demonstrated that you can pay good salaries, good wages and still be profitable.

Guaranteed basic income was the other one, Speaker, that we need to start looking at this seriously. I've heard from many people that when it came to income support, once they start working, it's almost clawed back dollar for dollar. At least with a guaranteed basic income, it allows people to actually work towards full-time employment, but it's not clawed back dollar for dollar. It allows people that opportunity to expand or, in some cases, not to work or cut back their hours because, either (a), they're too sick to work – and I've heard that from seniors. I've got seniors who want to work but feel discriminated against, and we got seniors who are too sick to work but have to work.

The gentleman in one apartment who is working two jobs, 80 hours a week, as a home care worker – what did he say he was? I think he was around 70. He was hoping to retire, have enough money by 75 to retire and to pay for his own funeral. Those were his words. Two jobs, 80 hours a week; I don't know how he does it.

I think we've got to find ways, not just to reduce the cost, because I don't think it translates into the savings we expect, but we've got to find ways in which to increase the income of people, especially the people who are on fixed incomes; not only increase them, but also, if we want to go after serious costs, how about bringing in some form of rent and vacancy control? How about a move towards more of a non-market,

community-based housing, so that the focus is not on profit, but on making sure people stay housed?

I know when we built the six units we have, I think the rent is still around \$600 or \$700. Think about that; you will not find that in the private market. You will not find that in the private market and for some people that's stretching. So if we want to focus on this, let's focus on those meaningful actions as well.

I know that the Minister of – I'm going to call it CSSD, but –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Social Supports and Well-Being.

**J. DINN:** – and Well-Being is committed to that.

I will compliment him on this, in terms of the issues I've reached out to him on, he's been responsive. I know where he is, but we still need to focus on real measures that are going to help make life affordable for the many seniors in this province, and now that I'm officially in that category apparently. I've gotten a message from my collaborative care clinic about workshops for older adults. Such is life; I'm into that realm, and I think we have over 10 per cent of the population right now or more is 80 years of age and over.

We've got a lot of people who have come into a fixed income, Speaker, and, certainly, when the Minister of Finance and his caucus are looking at this, we have to focus on issues that are actually going to give people more money.

As Hugh Segal said, "people with more money tend to be less poor."

While we might give the tax breaks, we might increase the personal exemption, we've got to make sure people have the money they need for the personal exemption and that means, if you want to

increase the prosperity, if you want to make sure that people can afford the healthy food, that they're not under constant stress – and I can tell you that if you talk to anyone who's struggling with affordability or poverty, they're under constant stress. You can see that in their health outcomes and everything else.

The Canadian Medical Association, in their journal a few years ago, talked about those who are homeless have more illness – let's say, you see illness in them that you normally see in a much older person. I don't know how many of you take the time to speak to the people on the street. I will go by and I'll have that conversation. There are people I've met who are, in some cases, 10 years younger than me, look 20 to 30 years older. They're younger but they look older, and you can tell that it's a hard life.

I guess, Speaker, I'll close with this: Great, let's talk about the reduction of taxes but, in the end, what we're doing is we're chipping around the edges. We've got to find ways to go boldly into addressing the issues of poverty and affordability. I guess addressing affordability in such a way that people don't end up on the other side of those margins or in the margins.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, that we now adjourn debate on Bill 5.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that we adjourn debate on Bill 5.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for St. George's - Humber, that this House do now recess.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that this House do now recess.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

This hon. House now stands in recess until 2 p.m.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Lane):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today in the public gallery, I would like to welcome the Gushue Girls.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** They will be the subject of a Member's statement today, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Lorna O'Reilly, Betty Hansen, Alice McCarthy, Cindy May, Nancy Dawe and Jeanne Collins.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** I also want to welcome back our Page, Riley Tucker.

Welcome back, Riley.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we're going to hear Member's statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Corner Brook, Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Gander, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

**J. PARSONS:** Speaker, I rise today to celebrate one of the finest traditions in our province: the Corner Brook Winter Carnival.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. PARSONS:** For more than five decades, Mr. Speaker, the Corner Brook Winter Carnival has brought families, neighbours and visitors together in the heart of winter to celebrate community. At a time of year when the days are short and the snowbanks are high, this festival reminds us that winter is not something to endure, but something to celebrate.

Winter Carnival showcases the very best of Corner Brook. It is powered by an extraordinary team of volunteers, local businesses, performers and sponsors who dedicate countless hours to making it a success each and every year.

Speaker, events like this strengthen our local community organizations, support our artists and our entrepreneurs and, most importantly, bring people together. They create memories for our children and our grandchildren that last a lifetime.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the carnival committee for another outstanding Corner Brook Winter Carnival.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

**J. MCKENNA:** Thank you, Speaker.

I stand to acknowledge Calvin Francis for his long-standing contribution to the community and the protection of the Atlantic salmon.

Calvin was born in Clarke's Head, Gander Bay to a family of nine children. He married Anne and, together, raised two children, and today are proud grandparents as well.

Last summer I had the pleasure of presenting Chief Calvin Francis with a 75th Confederation medal and certificate. Calvin is Chief of the Gander Bay Indian Band Council for over 40 years, a position he still holds today. He worked for the Federation of Newfoundland Indians as director of the Aboriginal Fishery Guardian Program for 20 years, and is currently president of the Gander Bay River Ecosystem Corporation.

He is the founder of the first River Watch Program in Newfoundland and Labrador. This program started on the Gander River in 1982, and was expanded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans across our province. The River Watch Program is made up of volunteers who, like Calvin, want to protect the Atlantic salmon from poaching, which was an issue due to the lack of enforcement. Chief Francis was also a member of the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation Advisory Committee.

Congratulations to Calvin for his leadership in salmon conservation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank Marie Bungay of Harbour Breton for her 20 years of

commitment to the Harbour Breton Community Youth Network.

Executive director of a youth organization in a rural community such as Harbour Breton is very important on many levels. Marie took great pride in her work, and here are her words: "I feel this job was extremely rewarding as it allowed me to grow, not only professionally, but personally. It provided the opportunity to create many community partnerships to make things happen, and to be part of many teams that worked together to bring about new opportunities and employment services, including Harbour Breton Community Youth Network becoming the licensee of Building Blocks Quality Child Care Centre of 2008.

"The biggest and most rewarding aspect was working with and learning from youth and children. They kept me young at heart and helped me to see the world through their lens."

As her signatory stated, "many things may change us, but we start and end with family."

Please join me in saying thank you to Marie for your years of service to the youth, and best of luck in your retirement.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Gander.

**B. FORD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today grateful for the opportunity to highlight a group of remarkable women: the Gushue Girls from my District of Gander.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. FORD:** Mr. Speaker, if ever there was a week to recognize these women, as curling fans from around the world take in the Brier right here in NL.

These women, all good friends and good curlers too, first attended the 2016 Brier in Ottawa. There were six of them, six letters in Gushue and they made media headlines sporting pink shirts with team letters, proudly waving Newfoundland and Labrador flags.

The Gushue girls – and I don't think I have this in their alphabetical order, Mr. Speaker – include Lorna O'Reilly, Betty Hansen, Alice McCarthy, Cindy May, Nancy Dawe and Jeanne Collins. They had substitutions over the years, Mr. Speaker, and even picked up a seventh who wore a thumbs-up shirt.

Why do they do this? They say: "We are just proud Newfoundlanders. We love the Gushue team, and the way they represent the province and the country with such class."

The 2026 Brier in St. John's isn't only Brad's last; it's theirs as well, Mr. Speaker. The Gushue girls, in their extensive travels, have represented Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador and the sport of curling with class. In stands and in the media, connecting with thousands, they have been phenomenal ambassadors and I'm so proud, Mr. Speaker, to have them in the House today to recognize them.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to recognize the remarkable courage and dedication of the volunteer firefighters of Bay Roberts Fire Rescue, Spaniards Bay/Tilton Volunteer Fire Department, Upper Island Cove Volunteer Fire Department and the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade, along with the Avalon North Wolverines Search and Rescue and all first responders who answered the call during the devastating

wildfires along the North Shore throughout Conception Bay North.

This past wildfire season forever changed lives. Families lost homes, treasured belongings and a sense of security. Fear and uncertainty weighed heavily on our communities. Yet, in our darkest moments, these brave volunteer firefighters stood firm. They worked around the clock for weeks in intense heat and dangerous conditions, determined to protect lives and property. Where residents were forced to flee, it was them who ran toward the flames.

Their selflessness and resilience represent the very best of who we are. Because of them, our communities were protected as best it could be, and hope endured.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking our volunteer firefighters, search and rescue teams and first responders for their extraordinary service, not only in times of crisis, but every day of the year. Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Before we proceed any further, I would like to also recognize in the public gallery, a former colleague, former MHA, Minister of the Crown, Charlene Johnson. Welcome.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I was pleased to participate in a historic announcement last evening, one that marks a turning point in our province's economic future.

Our government has signed agreements with Equinor and BP on life-of-field benefits,

royalties and an equity option for the Bay du Nord project.

This deal secures a path forward that delivers long-term value, strengthens local employment and ensures the benefits of this project remain here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The agreement exceeds what was negotiated in 2018 and will provide up to \$6.4 billion in direct revenue in the first phase of the project.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Importantly, this is the first life-of-field benefits agreement for an offshore project in our province. It ensures a sustained focus on benefits, not just during development, but throughout the entire life of the project.

Over the next 25 years, the project is expected to generate more than 31 million person-hours of work, including the fabrication of a minimum of 95 per cent of subsea components here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** For the first time, the agreement also includes targets for the employment of skilled trades apprentices, creating real opportunities for the next generation of workers. The agreement also includes \$200 million in fabrication funding to support long-term trades jobs and expand our province's offshore and maritime fabrication capacity, including work towards a large floating dry dock at Bull Arm.

Speaker, Bay du Nord represents an investment in our workforce, our communities and the continued growth of Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore energy sector. I want to thank the supporters of the project who have joined us today in the gallery, including Trades NL, Energy NL and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, we are back in the oil and gas business.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

**F. HUTTON:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Official Opposition, we are pleased to see the Bay du Nord project continue to move forward.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**F. HUTTON:** However, we have not crossed the finish line yet and the announcement yesterday has left us with a lot of outstanding questions.

The Minister of Energy stood in this House and firmly stated that all topside work should be done right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Premier and the minister gave their word to our workers, but ever since, we've watched them walk that promise back, lowering the bar piece by piece until they finally gave up on those local jobs.

On Saturday, the world was again shaken by major geopolitical events, and it is more important now than ever to protect our economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a stable energy source, we have the leverage to demand a better deal; instead, the government settled, trading local work and breaking a direct promise to our workforce.

What's more, the Premier is on record saying a full debate on a deal with Bay du Nord must happen before decisions are made that could lock the province into a deal that could sell this province short.

We're happy there is a deal; we fought for this for many years, but the people of our province have fair questions and they might have got those questions answered had the Premier brought this deal on a project to the House for a debate or an independent review, like he himself demanded in the past.

The people have questions and we will get them the answers.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement.

Now, while we're encouraged by the prospect of a benefits agreement, targets of apprenticeships and new jobs, the New Democrats are also waiting to hear the details, as we were not given a briefing on this so-called generational announcement.

We know Bay du Nord has been paused several times due to it not being economically viable and increasing costs, so we question what guarantees there are to ensure that this deal actually goes through in a year's time. We have concerns about the amount of public dollars that will be spent on this project and about the impacts on the environment, especially since the Premier, himself, said that oil and gas production has no influence on climate change.

Going forward, we urge the government to actually be transparent and practise what they preached while they were in Opposition.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, in this House, the Members opposite were absolutely furious that we would dare to hold them to account for the work that they promised for Bay du Nord and now we know why they were so angry; because, last night, they had to go out and admit to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that they couldn't deliver on what they promised.

As we expected, they are trying to sell the dry dock instead of topsides as a win, but what I ask the Premier is, why didn't he fight for the topsides and the dry dock for construction for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I stand here today after making an announcement last night that will have a significant impact on the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and the people that work in Newfoundland and Labrador, in particular our trades workers.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Not only have we created and moved the Bay du Nord project forward, but we've created a new industry for Newfoundland and Labrador, something that I have talked about in the election campaign and I continue to talk about. Because if we're really going to grow the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, we need to create new industry.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

As we've said, we appreciate positive steps toward jobs in this economy. The Premier mentioned the word "significant." Imagine how much more significant if he could deliver on his promises, which would be the topsides and the dry dock, but we know they gave part of that away already, Speaker.

It's important for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to know that this deal that was signed last night was the same deal that was on the table last fall, and we chose not to sign that deal in part because, at that point in time, Trades NL, who are here today, told us they would not support any deal without all the topsides work being done here, full stop.

So I ask if the Premier rushed this deal at the expense of our workers so he could have exactly the type of big, fancy announcement he claimed to hate yesterday?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, one of the things that I talked a lot about in the campaign too is if you really want to get something done, go talk to the people that worked there.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, that's what we actually did for the first time in this project, first time in our oil projects, we went out and consulted with the workers who were actually going to be doing the work. I'm happy to report that Trades NL were partners with us along the way and they

fully support the agreement that we have arrived at right now.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

I think the Premier missed the point that it was the same deal that was on the table six months ago. A deal that we chose not to sign because we didn't think it was the maximized benefits for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Last night, the Premier admitted that companies here in our province will only have an opportunity to bid on topside work.

So I ask: Why didn't the Premier use the full authority and leverage that the government has to insist on topside work guarantees during the negotiations and allow him to keep his promise?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, as I said last night and I will say again today, what we have done is created a brand new industry for Newfoundland and Labrador, working with the workers of Trades NL, to get this done. Something that is not simply boom and bust of all our major projects in the past, because we have a history of major work being done, lots of jobs being created for the short term and then when that's finished, the jobs go away, with lots of layoffs.

What we're doing as a government is creating industry and what this floating dry dock does, not only does it allow work during the construction phase of the dry dock, but it will provide work, jobs, jobs, jobs for years, years, years.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

And the creation of new industry, I would hope, provides guarantees for those jobs as well, because the Premier has promised that his new dry dock would be used for Navy and Coast Guard work.

Does the Premier have any guarantee from the federal government that these jobs will come or is this an opportunity as opposed to real jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this deal gives us apprenticeship numbers that the province has never seen. This deal gives us an opportunity at equity. This deal gives us a much higher amount of royalties. This deal gives us more fabrication than we would have gotten with the topsides. It gives us subsea work for the life of the deal.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** This government gave away the swing gates that could have been in Argentina, for money. They took a \$100 million payoff not to do it and now they stand here and talk like this.

This is a great deal and if you don't believe me, read the article from CBC where Trades NL says PCs delivered on their local benefits agreements.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** A minister doesn't need to remind me what was in the deal because it was the deal that I didn't sign because I didn't think it was a good enough.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I will ask the minister then, if the Premier is done answering questions: Why have they chosen to download the responsibility and put the burden on our local companies to bid individually on contracts for topsides when government could have just insisted that those companies in Newfoundland and Labrador will get that work?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition says a deal that he didn't sign. Well, he wasn't the leader a year ago and he certainly wasn't the minister of Energy and Mines. The next thing I'll say is that just a couple of months ago, the day after he had his briefing from Equinor, the general manager of Equinor looked at us, in the face, and told us that he's never met with the Leader of the Official Opposition.

As a matter of fact, he said that he only met with the Premier one time before. So perhaps the Leader of the Official Opposition can get up and explain when he met with him.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I'll just say, first of all, I've never seen a group of people who won something and are upset about it. I teach my daughter, when she loses at soccer, show some sportsmanship, smile, everything is okay. I never thought I'd have to explain to people that when they win, they're upset.

Speaker –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I understand –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

All you're doing right now is cutting into your time for Question Period, which I have no problem doing.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**J. HOGAN:** And I understand the responsibility of being an MHA and of being a minister and of being a premier. It certainly seems like in 125 days it's gotten to them already. Speaker, these are questions that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have asked us to ask on their behalf. If they don't want to answer, that's fine but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians see what's happening in the House of Assembly.

Now Equinor has publicly said that companies in Asia have a competitive advantage for topside construction. How can local companies who pay good wages and good benefits to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians compete when they hear statements like that from Equinor?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opportunities are here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will build a dry dock here. It will be built by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** We will complete the subsea work here – substantial subsea work – all of it, for the life of the field; the first time ever that we've had a life-of-field benefits agreement.

It will be built here in Newfoundland and Labrador –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The public thinks it's a great deal. CAPP thinks it's a great deal. The stakeholders think it's a great deal. Trades NL think it's a great deal. The only people that don't think it's a great deal are the Official Opposition.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

The minister continues to miss the point of why questions are being asked. We hope it's a good deal; we want it to be a good deal. We worked very hard on this project when we were in government, Speaker, but we want to make sure it's a good deal.

Now, when they were on the other side, of course, how did they know it was a good deal: Independent review, debate. What are we getting on this? No independent review,

no debate, not even answers to the questions, to be honest with you, Speaker.

So I'll ask another question. He mentioned all the work that's going to happen, but he cannot guarantee – just tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, you cannot guarantee that even 0.1 per cent of topsides will be constructed here.

Is that true, Minister?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good deal. It gives us an equity option. It gives us life-of-field benefits. It gives us construction of all subsea. It gives us the opportunity to create a new industry. It gives us fabrication and new jobs for 25 to 30 years. It gives us everything that we have missed out in the past.

This is the first deal since 2008, and this government has been sitting there since 2015. This is the deal that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians needed.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker, believe it or not, there was an answer in there.

It gives us an opportunity to create a new industry – that's what I said, I asked is this just an opportunity. Thank you to the minister for confirming that.

There was no guarantee that contracts will come from the federal government when this dry dock is built. It is an opportunity that was announced last night.

Speaker, Equinor reported a \$5-billion profit last year, and we know that oil prices are

skyrocketing due to the conflicts in the Middle East. Is \$200 million really the most that this government could squeeze from Equinor, and why didn't they link the cost of the dry dock to the rising cost of oil?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** One more group thinks that this is a really great deal, that's the federal Liberals. They think this is a great deal.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** "This agreement is an important step for Newfoundland and Labrador and for Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador's oil and gas industry was built by a resilient workforce in one of the hardest places to work and operate – and now, we are ready to build even bigger. Advancing responsible offshore development will enhance energy security; unlock billions in GDP; create thousands of high-quality, skilled jobs; and produce oil with an emissions profile we can be proud of. This is how we strengthen our economy and solidify Canada as a place to invest and as a reliable global energy superpower," Tim Hodgson.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. HOGAN:** Wake me up, I must be dreaming; the Minister of Energy is supporting the federal Liberals.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. HOGAN:** I've been telling them for five years – I've been telling them – how great it is to work with our federal Liberal counterparts, because we all know that this deal wouldn't be here if we didn't work with the federal Liberals to get it through the environmental process.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. HOGAN:** So thank you. I almost feel like I could retire, I've accomplished what I never thought was possible. The Conservatives in this province think the federal Liberals are the right choice going forward.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. HOGAN:** During its eight-year construction and startup phase alone, Hebron created 40 million hours of work right here in our province; the lifetime work of Bay du Nord is 31 million hours.

How can the Minister of Energy say that this deal is the best deal ever when it's not even the best deal in the oil industry?

Thank you very much, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what, we did support the federal Minister of Natural Resources, because he supported us, but, obviously, he didn't support them when they had it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** And, obviously, the Member across the way doesn't understand the difference between a GBS and an FPSO. They're two entirely different pieces of work, so now he's comparing apples to oranges and thinking the two projects are the same. I would suggest he goes away and does his homework and comes back with a different conversation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Equinor has agreed to give \$200 million towards a dry dock, but experts estimate it will cost at least \$350 million.

Speaker, I ask the government, did they ask the federal government to close the \$150-million gap that you announced yesterday?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we've indicated to all stakeholders, we are going to build a dry dock.

We are entering into a pre-FEED process right now so we understand exactly what it's going to cost. We have \$200 million put away and we have money set aside in this year's budget to start that immediately.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, the minister just said he didn't know how much the dry dock was going to cost.

What protections are there for taxpayers when the cost for this inevitably doubles, Speaker?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you what it won't cost, \$14 billion like they were going to pay for a hospital that they never budgeted for.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, this is a lifetime possibility, a generational opportunity for this province.

We understand the work, we've had the meetings with our federal counterparts, we know what this is and we will bring it to the end.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Speaker, in February 2023, the then PC leadership candidate, now the Premier, said a full debate must happen before decisions are made that would lock Newfoundland and Labrador into a deal that would sell the province short.

Will the Premier hold an emergency debate on Bay du Nord or will the Premier himself – when the Premier himself called for this agreement?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the province elected us to do the work for them.

I tell you what else we're not going to do –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**L. PARROTT:** I'll tell you what else we're not going to do. We're not going to spend \$300,000 or \$400,000 on an ad campaign –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – like they did with the MOU, trying to convince the public that it was a good deal –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – because the public knows this is a good deal.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, the minister just said the public knows this is a good deal; he doesn't even know how much it's going to cost.

The government just signed a binding agreement without bringing it to this House of Assembly and without telling the public that they abandoned their promise. We brought our non-binding Churchill Falls MOU to the House to this debate.

So I ask the minister, what is he afraid of?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not afraid of anything.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** We promised jobs. We promised a deal. We promised an evolution in industry. We promised to reignite this province and bring work back here and bring people an opportunity to come back here and work.

We delivered on our promises, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Conservatives, if they won't debate this deal in the House, will they at least commit to an independent expert? We all heard during the election how they didn't stop

talking about independent experts, just like they demanded on Churchill Falls.

If not, why the double standard?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Progressive Conservative government of Newfoundland and Labrador –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** – is here for the people that put us here, for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in all 40 districts –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. PARROTT:** – and this deal proves that – this deal proves that.

Mr. Speaker, this about jobs. It's about equity. It's about the future. It's about an industry that has been forgotten by the previous government – totally forgotten, abandoned. We had more projects happen in Guyana in six years than we had under 10 years of them – not one.

Mr. Speaker, we are delivering on the benefits as promised.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we're going to put all the facts on the table, our former premier met with Equinor on June 5, 2025. So at least we're giving facts here in the House of Assembly, and maybe we can get an answer to a question too.

The Conservative Party and the Minister of Jobs ran with the promise of topside work for the trades people of this province.

Does the Minister of Jobs agree with the Premier's decision to backtrack on this commitment and try to sell us all, as a province, on that dry docks are going to be there, when we could have had this anyway?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, we had the highest unemployment rates in the country. This province needs work. They need sustainable work. They need work as fast as possible. They need high-paying jobs and they need a way to move forward.

What this project does for this province is set us forward. It gives us the jobs that the Premier promised. The Premier ran on jobs for people. He ran on lower taxes.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** He ran on safer communities, and he ran on health care.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** The Bay du Nord project is going to help us deliver that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In November, the Premier boasted about Equinor – the fact that he got Equinor to

issue an expression of interest for the Bay du Nord topside work.

Did he get any success in this issue of expression before signing this binding agreement with Equinor? I'd like to get an answer for that.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So a little lesson in how it works: A contract goes out. There's an EOI. People respond to the EOI to see if they're capable to bid.

There are Newfoundland companies who have expressed interest in the topside work. It's not just one portion of work; it's every portion of the topsides. We believe portions of the topsides, possibly all of it, will be built here. We have an opportunity to build it. We have an opportunity to do it, absolutely.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** There is no separation between the two. Not only do we have the ability to do the topsides, but we have the ability to do the dry dock, too.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** There you have it, Speaker: possibly. That's the answer we were looking to all Question Period. There's no guarantees. They did a fancy announcement last night, but they didn't deliver on what they promised to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaking of the announcement last night, Speaker, and I'm thinking about the words

of the minister who hosted the event last night, talking about sexy health care in the House yesterday. The Minister of Health was hosting a fancy, flashy, sexy Bay du Nord announcement, and I was happy to see her there.

So now, on behalf of the people I want to know, will the Minister of Health now accept responsibility for the patients and staff in our health system and give them the new, modern provincial hospital that they so well deserve?

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, I take my responsibility as Minister of Health very seriously. When I started as Minister of Health, I was very disappointed and hurt, in some ways, at really the lack of services that were being provided.

I looked back as my seven years in Opposition and I was looking at all these announcements and then I was looking at where was the actual infrastructure, where was the actual staff that was supposed to deliver services, Speaker. So, to me, when I talked about sexy announcements, being I guess at the forefront of a lot of things, it was just because of my disappointment of the lack of action.

Last night was action.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** We are actually taking action. That's what action looks like.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier and minister are upset that we won't just take their word on the Bay du

Nord deal. The reality is that all we have is their word from their fancy announcement. After pretending to care about transparency and facts over headlines, they still haven't released the document signed last night.

Why is the minister afraid, Speaker, to show the public details?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would remind the Member across the way about a little thing called an MOU, in which they didn't even invite Opposition. They didn't invite them to anything.

Mr. Speaker, we came –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – through a negotiation and delivered. We actually delivered on a project that's good for this province. Royalties –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – equity, jobs, a floating dock, everything that the province needs we have delivered and they're sour about it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, yesterday the government pulled out all the stops in its announcement of a benefits agreement, not a final deal. Equinor will not make their final investment decision until 2027, next year.

So will the Premier admit that without a final investment decision from Equinor that yesterday's announcement, to use the Minister of Health's words, was a sexy, glamorous, public relations exercise?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I'll repeat once again, what we have been able to announce yesterday was something that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has been waiting a long time for. With everything that has been said, the entire focus of this announcement, the entire focus of what we have been doing is about workers, Speaker. It's about the workers of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what this has always been about. That's what it always should be about – how do we maximize the work done here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

We have not only been able to do that with the project, but we've been able to create a new industry, Mr. Speaker. A new industry that has the full support of the Trades NL workers, the trades workers of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what we've been able to do, Mr. Speaker, and we're very proud of it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, it's hard to tell the difference. Yesterday the government announced the Bay du Nord without inviting our caucus, without briefing Opposition parties and, basically, refusing to debate in the House of Assembly or even an oversight review.

It's familiar, Speaker, because that's the same approach we saw with an MOU on the Churchill Falls: no details, no transparency, except we did get a debate.

So I ask the Premier: Why has his government taken the same approach in the playbook on secrecy instead of transparency?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, once again, I will talk about what we have been able to do. Last night, I talked a lot about what we were forced to have. We were told for 10 years that we cannot do anything; that our industry wasn't alive and, yes, last night I acknowledged, Speaker, –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, last night, I took the opportunity to thank Prime Minister Carney for the work that he has done on getting our offshore oil and gas and getting Canada back in the oil and gas business, because that's what we do, Speaker. He had turned around, the elimination of the emissions cap, and the fact that we now have a new industry right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, a quick question with no preamble.

**S. O'LEARY:** Speaker, the province's fiscal situation is dire. This year alone we have an almost \$1-billion deficit. People in this province cannot afford to heat their homes or put food on the table as the affordability crisis continues to grow.

Yet last night, the Premier said he would take whatever it takes –

**SPEAKER:** Get to the question, please

**S. O'LEARY:** – to push this oil project forward but refused to discuss the amount the public will be paying.

I ask the Premier: How much public money will be spent on corporate welfare handouts to support a multi-billion-dollar company?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** I was starting to think I wasn't going to get a question because I gave them an F-grade on the fall fiscal update, but I'm glad I got my first question.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member asked a question yesterday, as well – or a petition yesterday – on affordability. In our platform, we talked about lowering taxes in order to make life more affordable for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

What the opposite side has missed lots of times is, the initial statement was, that this project will bring in \$6.4 billion in revenues.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, \$6.4 billion. Imagine what that can do for affordability for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, there's a shortage of family doctors in Western Newfoundland. Many residents depend on nurse practitioners to meet their medical needs. There's a cost to the patients for these services. Many residents can't afford these services and their health suffers or they go

to the emergency department. Your government made a commitment that nurse practitioners will be allowed to bill MCP for their services.

Can the minister inform this House of the status of this commitment? When will patients be able to have these services billed to the MCP at no cost to the patients?

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

We are committed to that pilot project. Our Premier has actually taken an initiative to expand the pilot project to include episodic care, and that's going to help cover a lot of shifts that weren't being filled that created long wait lists and gaps in services.

Also, it is funded for a year, but we are committed to making sure that we'll extend it. We're going to make sure that this pilot project, with nurse practitioners who are delivering medically necessary care, will not charge our patients.

So that's our commitment and we stand by that commitment to make that happen.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**E. JOYCE:** That's great news, once it gets installed for the people of Western Newfoundland.

The nurse practitioners are highly skilled and trained. They diagnose and refer patients to further testing. Their cost of an office and supplies prohibit many who offer these services.

Has the government considered helping these professionals with the cost of supplying these services to patients who the most important need is their services?

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, we've engaged a lot of nurse practitioners out there so they could join on to this pilot project. There are some nurse practitioners out there who haven't signed on yet, and one of the issues that they've been bringing forward is these costs.

We want to engage with them. We want to work with them to ensure that we can provide a program where they'll be able to work within our system and be able to provide health care to our patients with no cost to our patients, Speaker.

That's what the pilot project is. So I encourage everyone who hasn't actually contacted the Health Department to do so because we're willing to work with them.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Questions has now ended.

The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

**J. KORAB:** Thank you, Speaker. Just a question on a point of order, section 49 in the Standing Orders.

We have serious debates here and, to me, I feel we should be sticking to the topics. We have jabs back and forth at each other, that's completely fine, but the Member for Lake Melville commenting on clothing saying we should be shining our tennis shoes and then having the nerve to call me arrogant.

Speaker, I'm a lot of things, arrogant is not one of them. So for the second day in a row, I would ask the Member for Lake Melville to withdraw these comments and respect the House in which you are an elected representative, Sir.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**L. PARROTT:** That's not a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know why they would come in here and stand up and say that –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Are you the Speaker?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** I'm responding to the comment.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, obviously tensions are getting a little high here.

There is no point of order. You can go and rule on it but, at the end of the day, this is nonsense.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Tensions get high –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. HOGAN:** Tensions, absolutely get high and it's okay. As the Member for Waterford Valley said, a few shots back and forth, done, I think, in good humour and politely and ribbing each other is part of it. I can take it and it's okay but, you know, getting personal and talking about what people wear and how they look, the Member would

have taken an anti-bullying and anti-harassment course as well –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Is that what we're doing, Barry? Is that what we're doing?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yeah, exactly, come on – literally.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Speaker is recognizing the hon. Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** No.

**SPEAKER:** Or the Opposition House Leader, sorry.

**J. HOGAN:** Nope, keep going.

**SPEAKER:** Or the Leader of the Opposition – okay, okay, okay.

Well I'm getting addled now, go ahead.

**J. HOGAN:** Yeah, that's fine.

In all seriousness, Speaker, comments about people, how they look and what they dress like, it's just not fit for the House. I think that the Member should withdraw it. Even if it's not a point of order, defending it, I think, is not acceptable.

Thank you, very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The Speaker never heard the comments. I will review the tapes and so on, take it under advisement and report back to the House.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, appreciate it.

I'd like to table this document.

Yesterday, I was asked a question by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi – it was a very good question about –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**C. TIBBS:** – a climate action plan, of course, and how it affects communities moving forward.

She said that the Leader of the Third Party did not get a response. I would like to table the response that was sent out on February 25 to the Leader of the Third Party outlining everything that the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi asked about yesterday.

So I'd like to table this document, Speaker, please.

**SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

**M. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

The rising cost of living continues to place significant financial pressure on households throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Electricity is an essential service, not a luxury, particularly in a province with a harsh climate.

Many Canadian provinces have recognized electricity as an essential service and have removed, or never applied, sales tax to residential power bills. Removing the PST from electricity bills will provide meaningful and immediate financial relief for families, seniors and others on fixed incomes.

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 remove the provincial sales tax, PST, from residential electricity bills in order to reduce the financial burden on households and recognize that electricity is an essential service.

Speaker, throughout the campaign and over the fall since being elected, I've heard from a number of residents in my district, and not actually only in my district but throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that have had serious concerns about the doubling, in some cases, of electricity bills. I've heard stories, Speaker, of people in my district working on the Great Lakes for months at a time, no one in their house, no extra uses of electricity, and their bills are just doubling and tripling overnight. It's something to see actually and hear their stories.

For the government right now, something they immediately can do to help ease this burden is to remove the provincial sales tax from electricity. It was something that this Opposition promised during the campaign and I heard from many people in my district, as I mentioned, that they were looking forward to that promise to be delivered.

I appreciate the petition being presented to me to present here to the House and would

encourage the government to take that action immediately so families across Newfoundland and Labrador can have a bit of relief from their electricity bills.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I stand today on a petition on the diesel plant in Charlottetown – my hometown.

WHEREAS in October of 2019, Charlottetown lost its diesel generating station due to a fire; and

WHEREAS six years later, that plant has still not been replaced; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro decided to build back a regional facility and made an application to the PUB, and were rejected twice;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intervene so that a plant can be built back in Charlottetown.

Speaker, my signatures today are from Charlottetown, Pinsent's Arm, which is also heated by this plant, and also the neighbouring community of St. Lewis. Speaker, the very first signature on this petition is from the fire chief in Charlottetown.

Back in the fall of 2019, we lost our diesel plant due to a fire. I was in my hometown that weekend. It was a very difficult day. Hydro decided at that time that they would build a regional – they were calling it a super diesel at a time when the whole world was talking green. They decided they were

going to build back regional and loop in the five or six communities.

Speaker, they filed an application to the PUB. After a long time waiting, my community is running on mobile units which are only intended as a temporary measure. The PUB rejected, said it was not the least-cost option; it was about \$77 million at that time. Over time, we've seen it balloon to \$88 million and now it's at \$110 million. The PUB asked for a third party agency; Midgard came in and agreed with Hydro's side.

They went back to the drawing board again, and the Member opposite – the Minister of Mines and Energy knows; I sat down with him. The final decision only came down in the middle of the fall campaign. So it's not like, well, what did you do while you were there, on it? Because this decision came when this province was in a writ period. I sat down and met with the minister, I met with Hydro, I went out and I met with the PUB, and we are at a complete standoff.

Hydro don't want to change their stance; the PUB say it's not the least-cost option, so I'm calling on the government to intervene. We have the only shrimp processing facility in all of Labrador. We have a multi-species plant in Pinsent's Arm that depends on this. We're having fires where our local volunteer fire brigade is having to go out in minus 40 temperatures and fight fires, and when the water is coming from the hose it's turning to ice right away, and we're going to end up with a very serious problem, Speaker. It's Labrador, it's in the middle of the winter, year over year.

I was thinking, sometimes when there is a standoff, you've got to call in a tactical team. Well, right now, we're at a complete standoff, and I really do want to encourage the government, whether that's bringing new legislation so that the PUB is not tied to the least-cost option or whatever it is, but we've got to get a plant back in

Charlottetown. If it's not the regional one, do something for the seniors that I represent.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have met and discussed this, and she knows that it's a priority for this government. It's unfortunate how it's played out since 2019. She's not wrong in saying that the approval process is flawed, I think, in essence by the way it's gone.

The people of Labrador deserve no different treatment than the people that live in Newfoundland or anywhere else. So it is a high priority for us and we're looking at every and any option, and the Member opposite knows that I'll talk to her at any time.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**SPEAKER:** Given the hour of the day, this being Private Members' Day, I now call upon the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair to present her motion.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

Monday we gave notice that we would be introducing a PMR.

WHEREAS the current government recently cancelled the planned development of a new, modern provincial hospital; and

WHEREAS serious and ongoing issues continue to be raised by patients, front-line

health care workers and families regarding the deteriorating condition of some current infrastructure; and

WHEREAS St. Clare's Mercy Hospital officially opened over 100 years ago and was not designed to meet the demands of modern, acute-care delivery; and

WHEREAS the Conservative government has failed to provide to the public any analysis on costs to renovate St. Clare's;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to a new modern, provincial hospital.

Speaker, the seconder of that was the Member for Mount Scio who will be speaking later to the PMR.

During our time in office, even though it was not without its challenges financially, we did complete the Corner Brook hospital – started it and ended up completing it. Every time I drive the Parkway, I have to tell you my heart is very touched by that new mental health hospital that was put down there, that huge facility about \$300 million, because we know that health care is number one.

Health care needs to be a priority above everything else. If you don't have good health care access, what do you have? We often say to each other in our homes, if you don't have your health and your strength, what do you have?

So, Speaker, when the Facility Condition Index, which is an industry benchmark standard, did a report on infrastructure across the province back in '22 – that's more than four years ago, at that time – St. Clare's scored the lowest.

We were surprised when the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure on January 28, barely in office – I know from my time there moving from department to department – I think I served in eight

different departments – it takes time to get up to snuff on where things are – and just came out and made a quick decision that we're cancelling the hospital and we're going to renovate.

I have to tell you, as the shadow minister in this province, I have received so much feedback and continue to as recent as last night and, again today, in my phone, people are saying I heard your comment, stay on this. I think at the end of the day, Speaker, we just want to implore upon the government of the day, sometimes you make a decision; it's okay to go back to the drawing board.

I did an interview recently and I talked about, this is a hospital that I myself frequent. It's a provincial hospital so, often, there's people in from the Labrador coast and they're down in that hospital. It is really rundown. We were all sad – and I think it's okay for me to say his name, the story was very public and he was pleased that I participated in an interview recently. Mr. Lundrigan, I like what he said when he said, this is not political. He didn't really care if it's red, if it's blue, if it's orange, this is about health care.

This is an individual who was battling cancer – and we all know way too many, and we have, some of us, in our immediate family that are on very serious cancer journeys right now. I've had two family members in the last two months with extended stays at St. Clare's, one who's home right now and battling third infection in about three weeks.

You want to know that your loved ones, when they're going into a hospital, battling cancer, fighting pneumonia, other things that come with the health challenges, that when it's a cold, windy, stormy night when we're tucked in our homes, and we're, yes, thinking about the people that are clearing the road, thinking about the people that have to climb the poles sometimes when the power goes – one thing I can tell you I

wasn't thinking about, I didn't know until after the fact that patients at St. Clare's were saying, we're really cold.

Patients were sitting up with their parkas on, that are sick. Patients were saying, can maintenance come up and put a bit of plastic to the window, and then it was blowing out like a big chute. All of that points to the need, Speaker, that that hospital was needed.

This wasn't political. We looked at what FCI had given. I know that I have other colleagues that are going to speak to the cost and things, and I know the minister at the time of the announcement said this is a huge cost, but, Speaker, large infrastructure projects – and I was close to a number of them – you don't come out and you put all the money on the table in the first budget. I'm sure the Finance Minister now is going to learn that. Sometimes those projects are done in phases. You do a phase one, you do a phase two, and we've had a number of projects that have moved like that.

Speaker, I want to implore upon the government today during my bit of time with this PMR, that this debate is not about partisanship. It's about patient safety, system capacity and fiscal responsibility. We didn't see any publicly released cost-benefit analysis. Was there a cost-benefit analysis done? How much is it going to cost to repair? How many years are you going to do the repair over?

Every day we talk about beds in this House, and we know, as MHAs, every one of us here answer to a body of people that represents us, a region, a little spot on a map. For me, it's Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair that just hired me again for the fifth time to go back to work for them. So we have a responsibility to those people.

Speaker, the people deserve transparency, and they deserve infrastructure built for modern health care delivery. We know there's a shortage of beds. We're all hearing

from it. Our constituents are dealing with it. So during the renovation, there's going to be renovations happen in this facility that's more than 100 years old. We're already concerned about things like infection prevention, and how many beds are going to be lost while the renovations are happening? How is patient safety going to be able to be ensured while the renovations are happening? How is patient safety going to be able to be ensured while the renovations are happening?

Speaker, St. Clare's was built for a different era of health care, more than 100 years old. It was not designed for modern infection prevention and control standards. I do want to give a shout-out, Speaker. I've heard from a number of people that work down there. I want to give a shout-out to staff in those facilities that work extremely hard to prevent infection. They do their best to mitigate safety issues for the patients and I do want to toss a bouquet and commend the NL Health Services staff for trying to make the best of a situation that is less than ideal. I'm sure that some of them get a little downcast going to work in that old, dilapidated facility day after day.

Speaker, patient safety and quality care, which there are many aspects and many angles that you could look at this from, of why this hospital needs to be built, why there needs to be a plan put in place, why we're asking the government to go back to the drawing board to say, okay, maybe we were a little quick there. You know, we've heard a whole bunch of different figures tossed around on cost but, first and foremost and paramount, my heart is with patient safety and quality of care.

Older hospitals, typically, have multi-bed wards instead of private rooms, congested emergency departments, inadequate space for mental health and outpatient services and renovation, often, cannot easily fix this, Speaker.

You know you've got things like poor site layout, insufficient square footage or bed capacity, structural design. I talked about the impacts that we've seen, the stories that have recently played out with plastic wrap was taped over the windows. That's not a solution, Speaker. That is not a solution in 2026.

I was a little surprised, even myself, to learn that only the ICU, operating room and emergency room are air conditioned – that's it – in the entire facility. ICU beds, separated by curtains. No dedicated ICU bathroom there. Elevators constantly reported out of service. Out of service the last time I visited, a couple of weeks ago, Speaker.

I don't know why the minister is heckling me in a PMR. I'm going to politely give – everybody sit down and listen. This is not Question Period where we barb back and forth across. This is a serious issue. We get a chance. We had prioritized the new modern hospital for Newfoundland and Labrador and we want to bring forth the concerns that we are hearing from the people.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, this is not about cosmetic upgrades, reports of pest issues, the narrow hallways. I could go on and on. My time is very limited. The question we have to ask ourselves is whether this infrastructure itself is fit for the purpose.

I see that my time is just about gone, Speaker, and I'll have a couple of more minutes at the end to clue up, but I look forward to the debate back and forth. This is a very important issue, Mr. Speaker. We have an aging population – 25 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are over the age of 65. We know when we get along the road of life a little bit, that comes with health issues. There are all kinds of reasons.

My colleagues in this House who are from Labrador, there is no helipad down there. We know that life and death hangs in the balance of moments of time. Speaker, the plan that we had going forward would have taken care of all of that.

I thank you for the time and opening of the PMR.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's a great opportunity to get to your feet in the House of Assembly in this new role, this new setting. I know I sat on the other side for 10-plus years, so I've been partaking a lot of PMRs over the years. I've usually been on the other side pleading my case, which I know the Members opposite are doing and MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair just done the same.

Surprisingly, I'm not going to say everything she said was wrong. Not everything, but a lot of what she said is actually right. But I got a question. For the last 10 years or more, this current Opposition group were on this side, they watched the so-called – all these bad things she just listed off about St. Clare's, they've sat there in their seats.

The former premier, now the Leader of the Opposition, was Health minister. They sat in these seats over here and they knew this about St. Clare's back then and done nothing – absolutely nothing. These windows were windy and leaky. They didn't just start, the wind blowing through the windows the other day. This didn't happen last weekend. If we just said okay, we're going to build a new hospital, is that going to fix that windy window? Is that going to fix the air conditioning? Is that going to fix the

mice-invested hallways and wherever it's to in the hospital?

That was there long before October 14, Speaker – long before. This was a dereliction of duty on behalf of a government, and then it decided under pressure – the former premier, under the pressure of the day, decides to go down to St. Clare's – true story. People have told me; they worked in the hospital. They said, what's going on here? There was props going up in the lobby, wherever. It was the government sign. Well, apparently the Premier is coming here today. Very good – very good. Everyone was like, what's going to happen?

Lo and behold, he goes down and he announces a new hospital – a brand-new hospital for Kenmount Crossing – really great.

They go to buy this land – the land they had sold for \$84,000 and then, a few years later, they goes and pays \$400,000 an acre for it. There was no cost analysis done until we questioned them. They done the cost analysis after they bought the land.

So they done an appraisal after they bought the land, because we asked for one. They had the land bought and they done the appraisal. Now, I'm not sure, there might be real estate people – I don't know if my colleague from St. Barbe - L'Anse au Meadows, she was in the real estate. You do that before you go buy anything. What's the good of an appraisal after the fact?

Now we're getting into the health care debate, and I've heard the Member, my colleague, the Minister of Health, going back and forth with the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. This wasn't a health care decision. My colleague who tells us we have to spend more wisely, it's about smarter; he also said it was a fiscal decision.

When I went in that department October 29 – and anyone in this House, I challenge them to go in and get the same briefing I got. When I was sat there and I was showed the infrastructure list, it was alarming. I seen a cost figure pushing \$10-billion plus, plus, plus was what I've been told. Not my numbers; it was their numbers. There were ministers opposite that knew this number – the former premier knew this number.

What do I say? Okay, where are we to? What money is there? Anything in the fiscal forecast? Nothing, I think it was \$30 million. You had a \$10-billion hospital and a \$10.8-billion provincial budget; it didn't take a genius – I'm not the smartest fellow in the room, but I know how to count to 10 and I know that that was outrageous. You don't need to be a rocket scientist. Seriously, you look at that, it's like, wow.

Then when we make the decision, we go and we decide we're not going to proceed because it was a fiscal decision. We're going to redevelop St. Clare's. We're going to do other things too, the downtown wellness centre. It's not what's outside the building; it's what's inside the building. They shouldn't have let the building get to the state it's in. That's the question they should ask themselves.

For 10 years, they let St. Clare's get where it's to, but we are willing to take on that challenge. That hospital can be – we've talked to people. We've had engineers. People are giving us the safest advice. We're not just doing this on the back of a napkin, I heard people say. We're actually talking to engineers, we're getting people that are actually giving us advice and they say yes, yes, it can be redeveloped, but that's not going to happen today.

So if we said we're going to build that hospital, that's not going to eliminate the concerns the Member just raised. They're her problems. That's their issue. We're only in for 125 days. That's what you left us. We're trying to clean up your mess and we

will do a good job, trust you me, we will – we will.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Just got to give us some time. This don't happen overnight. Rome wasn't built in a day; you got to give us time. We will fix this. Trust you me, we will fix this. As evidenced by the announcement last night by our Premier, we're on the right track. Trust you me, we're heading in the right direction, for all of us – for all of us.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** One comment the Member opposite said, and her comment was, fiscal responsibility. We agree – I agree, we got to be fiscally responsible. That's why we decided not to go ahead with it. We decided we're going to redevelop St. Clare's. That's fiscal responsibility. Thank you, we agree with you. I agree with most everything you said.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Like someone in a blog said one time, they need to look in the mirror because all the criticism is about them. We were there and I was trying to learn the names of the departments, I was trying to learn the names of my ADMs and I flick on the television, and lo and behold, the Leader of the Opposition was blasting us. Why I never done this, and why the Premier never done this, and I'm like, b'y, I don't even know the name of the person he's talking about. I'm trying to find where the light switches are to and where the washroom is to, and he's up criticizing us.

I'm being honest. It's the reality – it's the reality.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** You want to be real? You want me to talk real to you?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** You've got all the answers, you've been there for 10 years –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – the Member for Conception East - Bell Island, he got all the answers – he got all the answers. He was in the car the other day – he was too busy to do it at home, sat in the car on a video. He's got all the answers. He's disgusted. He was driving I think – I mean, come on.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** And now, now he makes his smart decision – which by the way, I don't know who's lighting up the Member's phone opposite, our phones lit up with people saying: very smart decision. And you know what, I'll tell you all across the way, I've got this person who campaigned against me every single election, and the person who campaigned against me this last election, he's sending me notes every day and telling me great decision, great move, good on ya.

The first message I got after we announced we were cancelling the hospital, was one of the biggest Liberals of CBS, and he said, brilliant move. Now I could tell you his name, but I wouldn't do that to him; that's what he's telling me. So these are your people. So all of a sudden now to play politics, you're going to get up here today and you're right.

The Member for Conception East - Bell Island and the Member for Mount Scio, they were shocked when we cancelled the hospital. They were in disbelief. Tell me where we're getting the \$14 billion. Because there was a hospital built, similar size, in

GTA in Toronto, two years ago it opened for \$14.8 billion. Now these are officials that you used to be minister (inaudible) so trust you me, I trusted them – he did, I do too –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – you're telling me we're pushing \$15 billion, in today's dollars in Newfoundland, we're going to be pushing higher than \$15 billion, \$16 billion, even if you start shaving back from the building. So this will not cure our health care problems. Cutting out a hospital is not going to solve health care. My colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, she's well equipped to deal with our health care problems, along with the Premier and this government, and we will do that for each and every person in this province – for everyone.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. LOVELESS:** (Inaudible) the PMR now.

**B. PETTEN:** It's all about the PMR, I say to the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. I'm looking forward to him getting on his feet. When he used to be over here in the position I'm here now, he was really good at chirping. We had a good back and forth, and I enjoy a bit of chirping, but I'm looking forward to him getting up on his feet and asking a few questions. Because my first day, we introduced 24-hour snow clearing and the biggest critic I had was the former minister. He couldn't understand why we introduced it and what were are doing with no staff. My question to him was why didn't he do it?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** That was my question; why didn't he do it? He had lots of time to do it. I said they're underpaid. Yeah, I knew that. He called in – he couldn't wait to get on *Open Line*; I knew that all along, they're

underpaid. I agree, so we got a market adjustment and looked after that piece. So we're well on the way.

We've done, in 125 days, what you couldn't do in 10 years (inaudible) –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, on that note, I'd like to move an amendment.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, our Premier, that the private Member's resolution be amended as follows: In the first WHEREAS clause, by deleting the word "modern" and by inserting immediately after the word "hospital," the words "which was not budgeted for and was fiscally irresponsible."

By deleting the second, third and fourth WHEREAS clauses and inserting the words, "WHEREAS the current government committed to renovating St. Clare's to extend its useful life, and also committed to rescope and plan downtown health centre to address any gaps in services";

In the last paragraph, by deleting all the words that come after THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED and substituting the following: "that this hon. House urges the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to assessing the changes required to ensure that the provincial health care facilities receive the infrastructure upgrades needed to support the work of the health care professionals delivering services within them and to ensure high-quality health care to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador."

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** We will take a brief recess to consider the amendment.

### Recess

**SPEAKER (Lane):** Order, please!

After reviewing the amendment, we've determined that the amendment is not in order.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Now, St. Clare's is in my district, Speaker. I've been there.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** We had a family member there. I was there for a friend of mine's final days. I can tell you that the hospital might be old in certain parts, it certainly is not decrepit in all parts. I've been there, as I said, if anything else, I haven't encountered the windows that are leaking wind, but I found it very hot and comfortable if anything else. However, that's not to say repairs shouldn't happen.

I do have three issues with the PMR, because part of it I do find, there is a certain element of when we need new hospitals; but when I'm listening to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, a lot of what he says too makes sense, and I'm probably more along those lines.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** I'm going to start with this. Let's clarify the facts. Because we've heard in the resolution, and we've heard it over and over again about the age of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital. Opened more than 100 years ago, we've heard how old it is and so on and so forth. So let's get something straight. The only building – the only building there – that's over 100 years old is the white house on the corner of St. Clare Avenue and Lemarchant Road.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** And to say then, to put the rest of the hospital in that is being disingenuous, I believe.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** In 1921, the white house, already owned by the Sisters of Mercy, was renovated to serve as a hospital. In 1922, it officially opened for 23 patients. In 1939, a new hospital was built with 100 patients, just west of the white house. In 1950, a large chapel and additional facilities for pediatrics and obstetrics and dietary services was built. A new wing was opened on St. Clare Avenue for 100 additional patients. In 1963, planning for a new wing began. In 1972, the last new wing on Ricketts Road was opened.

Now, just for context, Speaker, the Health Sciences opened to the medical school, the medical school moved to the Health Sciences in 1974. In 1978, the Health Sciences opened as a hospital. That's six years later than St. Clare's.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** So when we're talking about the age, let's make sure we get things straight. That's the first thing.

The second thing, maintenance – and I've got to deal with maintenance because maintenance has been deficient on both sides of the House here.

I'm going to start with the Firth of Forth bridge in Edinburgh. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and I got to see it when I was over there in Education International, I think, in 2017. It opened in 1890, 136 years ago. Cantilever design, first of its kind; 2.5 kilometres long; 200 trains a day use that bridge daily; three million passengers. They started the paint cycle. They start at one end, work to the other, and then they start it all over again: a never-ending paint cycle, until about 2001 when they decided to put on more durable cladding. They even have

now a 25-year plan to maintain it – 136 years old. Age itself is not the determinant of whether a structure needs to be decommissioned.

It does say this: You can either maintain it, or you can let it fall down so that it does become decrepit. Folks, we don't have to go too far to find out that. Out in the lobby here, we've had elevators, and we all know what they are. They haven't been working since we've been here, especially the middle one, and sometimes all three. The parts for the elevator are over in the containers on the other side of the parking lot. Six years, we've been here, and they haven't been fixed yet. Now they've started, but we've got a nicely painted work area there.

MUN deferred maintenance. How many hundreds of millions in deferred maintenance at Memorial University? We've got a new Core Science building that's not even fully occupied, but we've got buildings falling around us.

We've got Newfoundland and Labrador housing units – and I've fought this over the last few years – that are falling down because of a lack of money to invest in them and a lack of personnel to keep them up. That is not on the current because this is going back decades.

Mealy Mountain Collegiate, New World Island Academy, École Rocher-du-Nord, all examples of maintenance that has been deferred, that has not taken place. I can speak to Holy Heart, Speaker. I taught there. I watched how that building was not maintained. We had a major incident that almost shut the school down permanently when a little yearly maintenance could have solved it.

So St. Clare's elevators, windows, this comes down to a failure; I would say a dereliction of duty to maintain the facilities over and over. If we're going to shut down St. Clare's because windows are leaking, elevators are not working, we might as well

start with this building here because we've got new windows in and they're still leaking and the elevators don't work.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**J. DINN:** From the get-go, Speaker, the issue with the new hospital has been problematic for a number of reasons.

First of all, there was no mention of the need for a new hospital in the Health Accord, okay? It came out of the blue. Secondly, the whole decision to shut down St. Clare's and to build a new one was shrouded in what I would call a lack of transparency. We didn't know how much the land was going to cost; no answer could be given to that. There was no independent assessment of it as to what the cost was.

I can tell you also, if we find out after that it's actually going to – the land deal involved a very good friend and supporter and donors of the Liberal Party at that time –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**J. DINN:** – but before we get too puffed up, keep in mind –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** I've been a teacher under both administrations, and the president of the NLTA under both, and there's no real difference, Speaker.

However, let's talk about the Health Accord. Let's talk about the Health Accord. The social determinants of health and, as for the hospital, it's not a matter of the hospital – the problem of the ERs – it comes down to the fact that the hospital is over capacity, and not because it's too small, but because we've got so many people who need to be in long-term care beds or acute-care beds. That's where we need to focus.

We can build all the new hospitals we want, but unless we have workers to fill them, it's not going to make a bit of difference. What about recruitment and retention? What about investing in maintenance? What about making sure that the people in my district also will have access to a hospital.

So there are things we can do, than building a new one. I don't mind, build a new structure, but, for God's sake, you've got to make sure you're looking after it, because if we build a new structure and then let it fall down, it makes no difference.

I can guarantee you, go over to the Health Sciences and you'll still find a lot of the maintenance issues are there. What am I talking about – sure, we had bodies stored out in freezers for some years because they couldn't deal with that.

So from my point of view, address the issues that are going to improve health care first, when it comes to the personnel, the people in the system that we need. Address the social determinants of health. Make sure that people who are in acute-care beds are in the long-term care facilities to get the long-term support that they need and, finally, for God's sake, if you've been in St. Clare's, make sure that the people who use it also have something to go to, regardless of whether it's a refurbished hospital, whether it's a walk-in clinic. Let's do it.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** I want to acknowledge the Leader of the Third Party because I think he probably has the same notebook that I do when it comes to talking

about the issues that we have faced in health care and some of the issues that he just brought up.

When we think about health care, it's not about the physical building; it's about the people. The people that work in health care, the people that provide the services and it's, of course, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who require those services.

To his point, that the Member of the Third Party made a second ago, because we all talk about the Health Accord and the importance of the Health Accord, we all believe that the Health Accord was a good thing, but the challenge with the Health Accord is how it's been implemented. That has been a problem because the lack of planning often results in things being announced that aren't really thought through. That's where part of the challenge lies in what we've been able to do.

So, to his point, there was no mention of the need for a new St. Clare's hospital anywhere in the Health Accord; not one page of that entire document talked about the need for a new hospital.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** But what it did talk about – I'll give him credit again – it talked about the social determinants of health, and that is exactly what we ought to be focusing on.

That is why, after 10 years without a real strategy, we will introduce a poverty-reduction strategy that will once again –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** – (inaudible.)

Let's talk about the need and talk about what we really need in this province. It was brought up earlier by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands in his speech this morning when he talked about long-term

care and the shortage of long-term care beds.

Right now in our province on any given day, there are between 300 and 400 people sitting in acute-care beds, patients taking up acute-care beds that are, for all intents and purposes, medically discharged or require advanced levels of care. Think about that; that is a full hospital. That is a big hospital – 300 to 400 people.

So one has to ask ourselves: How do we get it there? How do we get to a situation where we find ourselves now with surgeries being cancelled, with patients being held in emergency departments because they can't get access to beds?

I recently spoke to a physician who told me that the challenge with the emergency departments, when you see all of these people in the waiting room, that wait for 18 or 20 hours, it's not because they can't be seen, it's because they've got no where to see them; because, in fact, inside the doors of the emergency department, all the rooms are filled with patients waiting to go upstairs or to a bed or to be moved. They're sitting in corridors, so the people out in the waiting rooms are waiting even longer because of that.

I recently spoke to an emergency room nurse at St. Clare's Hospital who talked about the opportunities for change and some of the things that you said could be done to actually improve services. Her complaint wasn't about staff or anything else, she talked about things that we ought to be looking at, like discharge planning. She told me the story about the number of times that patients are waiting to leave the hospital, waiting because we can't figure out a way to get that discharge planning moving so they can be discharged in the morning and the bed can be cleaned on time and somebody that's sitting in emergency can actually be moved up to that room, to that bed.

There are solutions out there, Speaker, to a lot of the issues that we face in health care right now, but where are you going to find those solutions? You're going to find them by going out and talking to the people that work in the system, the front-line workers.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** That's where planning comes into, because, as I will speak again to the Member of Humber - Bay of Islands, they knew that those alternate level of care beds existed in the old Western Memorial hospital. They knew that the new hospital did not include those alternate level of care beds; yet, when the new hospital opened and it was time to transfer all of the old patients from the old Western Memorial to the new, they blocked all the acute-care beds, because when you don't have proper planning, that's what happens. Then what did we have to do? We had to backtrack and try to open up the old Western Memorial hospital to try and move more alternate level of care patients out of the acute-care facility in Corner Brook and in.

It's not a matter of not having enough acute-care beds. Our problem right now is long-term care. Over 25 per cent of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are now over the age of 65, so we have a challenge on our hands, and that demand for long-term care is not going away. It's actually going to increase.

So if we don't seriously start taking a look at how we fix this because unless we can find a way to take those 300 to 400 acute-care beds that we currently have in our system right now and actually have people using them for acute-care services so that we can do the surgeries, so we can have people admitted to hospitals – if we don't start to plan for that and figure out a way – that is the biggest challenge right now. It's not about more acute-care beds; it's about long-term care and the need to find places for people.

We've got systems in place, you know, home care. Well, if we're going to talk about home care, let's make sure it's part of health care, because we all know the challenge with home care workers and the way they're being funded and the salaries they make. We need to make it so that it's not just a job; it becomes a career. We have a lot of work to do in that area. We also have our personal care home sector that we need to be able to take full advantage of.

Of course, we have now started planning on how do we fix this issue where so many people – think about your parents or your relatives or someone who has been discharged, medically discharged, but now they're waiting. They can't go back home. They've been told they can't go home, so now they're waiting to be placed in a long-term care home, and they're sitting in an acute-care bed. Are they getting the services they really need?

The staff in acute-care hospitals are not there to work with long-term care patients. They're there for the work with acute-care patients. So a lot of times, those long-term care patients aren't getting the supports they deserve. They're not getting the supports they need. That, to me, is one of the biggest challenges right now that we face because that's what we ought to be talking about. How do we plan? We've got a lot of work to do to solve that issue.

It's not going to happen overnight because I can't turn on a light switch and, all of a sudden, we have more long-term care beds, but we have to start. We have to look at how we could do it because it is a huge issue for us. We built a new long-term care facility in Corner Brook, but guess what? We didn't build it to what we were told in reports that it needed. We didn't build it big enough. We cut corners and made it too small.

We have to start taking these reports that we get commissioned, that we pay a lot of money for and start talking about, how do

we actually make sure that the work we're doing and what we're doing is working?

You know, there was a lot of announcements about Family Care Teams, something that the Health Accord promotes, something that everybody thinks is a good idea. But when you rush to implement Family Care Teams and build buildings and all of a sudden there's nobody in them because we've never bothered to worry about how do we recruit first – we need to have staff. We need to talk about recruitment. We need to talk about retention but, most of all, we need to talk about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and what they really need.

If I'm sitting here today and I'm talking about expenditure of money and where we're going to invest, it's going to be an investment in long-term care. There are 300 to 400 seniors that are sitting in acute-care beds, that are waiting for long-term care placement. Well, finally, we can get that issue solved. That's the priority.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

**J. KORAB:** Thank you, Speaker. I'll make one comment before I start. I think it was three days into being a minister on that side and the Member who is now the minister – this isn't a shot at you, by the way. The Minister of Justice and Public Safety was then the MHA for Harbour Main told me, after three days, I should be up to speed in my department, and 141 days in and Minister Petten can't find the light switch, it's a double standard here, I think.

Anyway, I digress.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**J. KORAB:** The TI Minister have it on automatic timing now, so he's all good.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I would just remind the Member that we don't refer to ministers by their name.

**J. KORAB:** Oh, sorry, if I did, I retract that.

**SPEAKER:** Just following the rules.

**J. KORAB:** Fair enough.

Speaker, today I rise concerned not just as a Member of the provincial Liberal Opposition but as someone who cares for family, about the people of this province, about the decision the Progressive Conservatives Party of Newfoundland and Labrador government made to cancel the Kenmount Crossing hospital.

To me, Speaker, I feel we're at a pivotal point in the future of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital. It's not just another infrastructure project; this was a chance for generational investment in health care. It was a commitment that reduced wait times, expanding services, supporting health care workers and meeting the growing needs of the families across Newfoundland and Labrador.

For years, we relied on temporary fixes of an aging facility operating, but the situation has become unattainable. Technical, for a second, in the world of infrastructure management, a building rated above 0.10 on the Facility Condition Index is considered in poor condition. St. Clare's stands at 0.34, more than triple the threshold for failure.

Essentially, we are attempting to deliver 21st century health care, in a 19th century structure. It is no longer fit to be a hospital, so to solve health care we have to not have shrinking ambitions. It's not about old paint or cracked tiles; it's about providing essential health care for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Our government recognized this reality. We looked at the data, we listened to staff and we made a responsible decision to build a

hospital at Kenmount Crossing, a building that would service all the northeast Avalon and the entire province. But, as we know, that decision, Speaker, was overturned.

The hospital project was also tied to some critical infrastructure upgrades, including the water tower, which would have really helped the surrounding municipalities, including Paradise. This infrastructure wasn't about this one building, but it would have unlocked potential residential and commercial growth. I will add that the three mayors of St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise were all in favour of this announcement.

Speaker, this decision is particularly troubling given the history here. I'm glad the Premier just talked about the reports, that we should follow reports. Ross Wiseman, who was the recycled and appointed chair of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, was also the Conservative minister of Health in 2007, when he commissioned a report outlining the exact structural deficiencies. He and the Conservatives chose to do nothing with these findings, which recommended replacement of the Waterford Hospital and St. Clare's, to be replaced along with other critical infrastructure.

Contrary to the Leader of the Third Party, this wasn't out of the blue – sorry, he's not there; didn't mean to do that. So this wasn't out of the blue, this was a report that was commissioned in 2007. On the other hand, our government knew what health care delivery looked like. When we were in government, we delivered the adult Mental Health and Addictions facility here in St. John's; Western Memorial hospital in Corner Brook; and long-term care homes in Corner Brook, Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor.

We chose to replace St. Clare's, as the Conservatives had been advised, but instead of progress, the current Conservative government has abandoned the replacement, the new Kenmount

hospital. How do they justify it? I would say we talked about fictional costs.

So, Speaker, to justify their use of the highly inflated numbers, I would like to see the costs. Figures like \$10 billion, \$14 billion are being thrown around. They're saying they've got these numbers from staff, but if the numbers keep changing, it doesn't add up. It doesn't align with the scenario of the Canadian construction history.

Speaker, just for some numbers, the adult Mental Health and Addictions facility cost \$330 million; Western Memorial was \$750 million; Gander and Grand Falls long-term care facilities was \$112 million combined; and the Corner Brook long-term care facility was \$120 million, so that's about \$1.3 billion – \$1.3 billion. So to say it's \$10 billion, say it's \$12 billion and then they say it's \$14 billion – Speaker, next week it's probably \$16 billion.

For context, the only hospital project in Canada approaching \$14 billion is a 22-story, almost 1,000-bed Mississauga hospital development – one of the largest, most complex health care infrastructure projects in this country. It will serve us more than four times the population of the entire province.

Perhaps the Minister of TI mixed up Mount Pearl and Mississauga, I'm not sure, but to compare a modern replacement of St. Clare's to that project, Speaker, to me is not credible. I think it's a scare tactic to justify this inaction. To reach the cost being tossed around by these ministers, the construction inflation would need to be about 34 per cent annually. That's four times the historical average.

So we're renovating St. Clare's. The alternative now is renovating this old building and, as the Leader of the Third Party – he gave the history lesson. I won't go into that, but let's look at the physical reality of that building.

The province's own data shows the basic maintenance cost alone is \$2 million annually, just to keep the lights on; capital repairs needed to address the current deterioration were estimated at more than \$42 million, and that was five years ago in 2022, but even those figures are outdated and the infrastructure standards are clear. When the facility condition exceeds 50 per cent, the cost to repair outweighs the value of the asset. St. Clare's is already past that threshold.

Speaker, I return to the question: Why we made the decision to replace St. Clare's?

Well, it wasn't just because the building was old, and I agree with what the Premier said – someone on my side now might boo me for that, but I agree with what the Premier said a few minutes ago – it's about the people delivering the health care, but unfortunately staff are leaving, Speaker.

In June 2025, yes, under our watch, five internal medical specialists gave their resignation – why – because they cited unsafe working conditions. So recruitment of doctors and nurses, Speaker, they want to work in new, modern facilities. They don't want to come and work in a building that they hear is 100 years old that's getting renovated.

The current government thinks they're saving money while the Health Minister was on CBC talking about how the health care – and, in fact, I feel the Health Minister is doing the exact opposite with cancelling this. You can renovate a hospital wing but you can't repair the reputation once the doctors walk out the door.

If the government truly believes that cancelling the new hospital and pursuing renovating St. Clare's is a fiscally responsible approach, where's the proof? If they can show me the proof, I'll even get on side of it. I need to see the evidence. Show me the evidence. Show us the evidence.

Table the evidence. You can't show what doesn't exist, Speaker.

What are the long-term maintenance predictions for a 100-year-old shell? Show us how it's more cost effective to renovate a hospital than it is to build one? If you start throwing around numbers, we get to budget time, how are we supposed to leave this?

The public deserves a clear comparison. We need to show the cost, what the new facility is, versus the one that's aging. As I say, experts say it's deemed unavailable, and that was over almost two decades ago. The experts told your chair of NLHS the very same thing when he was the minister of Health.

Speaker, I question how much we can spend to extend the life of a failing building; how much longer we're willing to delay the inevitable. Every dollar spent patching up St. Clare's is a dollar taken away from a modern, safe, permanent solution.

The Conservatives have – sorry – the Progressive Conservatives have told us this, but the only thing I can figure is that they have chosen to cancel the project because it was a Liberal decision project that the Conservatives are refusing to make. Is this politics before health care? I'll let the public decide that, but I feel they are putting the politics before health care.

To me, it's a disservice to every patient that lies in the bed at the St. Clare's hospital. We don't need another round of temporary fixes. We don't need more reports. We need a safe, modern hospital at Kenmount Crossing. We need a government that values citizens' lives before political talking points. We, as the Opposition, will continue to push for answers, and we will continue to advocate for patients.

We'll also continue to fight for the health care system that reflects the strength and compassion of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because our community,

certainly, they deserve better. Our health care workers deserve better. Our families deserve better.

Speaker, look, I'll just say, while I've taken shots at the government over there in the last little bit, I honestly do truly feel that they do care about health care and they do care about the province and the health care delivery here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I just truly hope, Speaker, that they make decisions based on what's beneficial for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and not just for political points.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today I rise in response to the private Members' motion regarding this new provincial hospital, and I guess just to sort of talk about some of the reasons why we decided to not go ahead with this new hospital.

Our new PC, Progressive Conservative – we're always being called Conservative, but we are the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador – provincial government, we inherited a health care system that had a lot of problems. It wasn't meeting the needs of patients.

The whole system, Speaker – as Minister of Health, I can say that – we've had issues with long wait times in Emergency that were years building. We have a medevac system with a lot of problems. We heard from patients while we were in Opposition and we hear from them now about long wait times for medevacs. We also hear about hospitals at capacity. We hear about

patients in emergency on gurneys. That sort of thing, Speaker.

At the end of the day, people would probably be surprised – well, why, new Minister, would you cancel this, the new St. Clare's, because wouldn't it solve those problems? Wouldn't a new acute-care hospital solve those problems? I think that's what the people of the province are asking us, Speaker. They're certainly asking me as the Minister of Health.

At the end of the day, Speaker, there are many layers to this. The Premier has talked a bit about it, you know, and I've spoken out through the interview process and I've also spoke in the House of Assembly. Speaker, what we're witnessing at St. Clare's, at the Health Sciences and other hospitals, they're all at capacity – over capacity.

Speaker, when you've got people in beds upstairs and you're in emerg, you can't admit somebody. That's why we've got people in the hallways on gurneys. If there's no bed upstairs for them, the doctor can't admit them. Then what happens is, the paramedic that may have brought them into emerg is delayed. We heard about that. That's the reality. That's the truth. We know about that. That's the reality that I'm facing. Those are the calls I'm getting; paramedics being hung up for hours, long wait times at emerg, people out on the gurneys.

Some of our MHAs, our minister's here, have witness that first hand. They've witnessed that first hand with their loved ones there at emerg. I've witnessed it first hand. So, as Minister of Health, I went to bat, because, for me, it's where there's a problem. Well, what is the problem first off and what are the solutions? What are the long-term solutions? What are the short-term solutions? A hospital is at capacity, Speaker, what's the solution?

I was told that a big part of these hospitals at capacity, where there's no free beds – because there are usually supposed to be a

certain percentage of free beds so that you can admit somebody or that you can schedule a surgery. I forgot to mention that one of the problems I encounter too is we've got people up in Labrador, people over on the West Coast and they're missing their procedure over in St. John's. What I found out as Minister of Health, I found out what's the problem for that constituent, there's no bed available so they can't have their surgery. They can't have their procedure.

So beds at capacity and no room in the hospital are tying up everything. It's really creating the problems that we're struggling with. So getting back to what's at the root of this, how come a certain percentage of beds are not there?

Because when you admit a patient, then usually what you do is you take care of them and then they're released, they get to go home or they get to go from the hospital improved.

Speaker, the thing at the root of this is a lot of those free beds that should be available are being taken up by people who – they're in the hospital – are waiting for long-term care beds. They are waiting for personal care home beds. They can't go home because their family members or supports that they have, or sometimes they don't have supports. They can't look after them. They need this alternate level of care.

That's what's been missing, Speaker. It hasn't been addressed. My frustration came out yesterday; I was frustrated. That's why I called it sexy – sexy announcements. That's how frustrated I was, Speaker, and I guess, for me, it's just frustration. First off, I get in there and we know that 25 per cent of our population now is over the age of 65. We know that. We also know we have the highest rates of chronic disease. That's a fact, isn't it? We know that.

We don't have a very overly healthy population, and we have a population that's aging. So we know, of the common sense –

even me, right, when I was in Opposition, I knew that a lot of those beds were going to be taken up by people who need care. The problem is, right now, that we have not planned – I shouldn't say we, because I was in Opposition; I wasn't in government for 10 years. I tell you if I was in government for 10 years, I would have been going to our Premier and saying we need to address this, Premier.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Because my constituents, and constituents across the province who meet me in Wal-Mart and chase me into the bathroom – true fact – when I was in Opposition, talking to me, seniors talking to me about the need for long-term care beds. Now, Speaker, that wasn't addressed, and that's a big part of the problem. So I asked the question: Will building the new St. Clare's to replace the old St. Clare's – will that solve the problem? And, Speaker, I was told no, it's not. It'll bring these acute-care beds, but the problem is going to follow, and follow and follow until we do something to address the needs of our seniors.

Speaker, who are our seniors? We talk about seniors here a lot. They built our province. They're the ones that were out there fishing. They were the ones out there cutting the wood when we used to have the Linerboard. I remember Labrador Linerboard. People would come down to Labrador and work hard, Speaker. They were the ones that built Churchill Falls. They're the ones that worked to build our province, and now they're older and they need respect.

Family members are struggling to support them. When they go into the hospital and they stay in the hospital, they shouldn't be out on a gurney. They shouldn't be. Or a young person who's admitted to emerg out on a gurney. So, for us, we have to solve the problem. It's not very fancy. Long-term care homes are not overly glamorous, glitzy. It's not something that a lot of people would

say wow. But do you know something? It's about respect.

When you talk about access to health care, access to adequate, quality health care, Speaker, we're not only talking about people who need acute-care beds, we're talking about our seniors who built this province first, Speaker, and they deserve respect. At the end of the day, that has to be our mission, to make sure we're addressing that. It's really hard to start from scratch because the failures of the past 10 years of the Liberal government is forcing us to start from scratch. It's forcing us to start from scratch.

But, at the end of the day, Speaker, that's the one message that's not getting out there. So I took all my time to talk about that. There are other issues. I got a lot of notes here, but anyway, I want to just go through something. In October 2022, the previous administration announced plans to replace St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in St. John's. In 2024, they announced Kenmount Crossing was the location of the new hospital. However, the former government did not add one dollar to the fiscal forecast to account for the cost of a new hospital – not one dollar.

You want to talk about fiscal responsibility and transparency. Do you know something, Speaker? I'm questioned about the \$10 billion, \$14 billion. We were told it was going to cost over \$10 billion, but really it will probably be more like \$12 billion to \$14 billion. That's what we're doing. That's why we're talking about those numbers.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, another thing I want to point out about the patients having to put on a winter coat in St. Clare's. What were they going to do while the new hospital was being built? In 2023, a physical assessment of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital was proposed, but the previous administration deemed this

assessment to be unnecessary. Where are we going to do the repairs?

In the interim –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to stand and have a few words about this and talk about it. There's no doubt that health care is a big issue across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, absolutely no difference. When you hear the debate going back and forth here about situations that have happened in the province, and sometimes you've got to do your analysis on it. I just want to give you a bit of perspective here; I'm not being critical, but I'm being honest.

There were just 45 beds put in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital. It's 76 years old. Forty-five beds just put into a facility that's 76 years old, going on 77. So age doesn't matter. If you properly maintain it and ensure that the facility is in good shape, it can be done.

From what I heard from the minister, is that there's no money in the fiscal forecast for this. Just to put it in perspective again, there's 162 beds at the Corner Brook Regional Hospital, which is over half what's in St. Clare's, and the cost was about \$800 million, not \$10 billion. I think it was \$832 million for 162 beds at the time.

So when you just get a cost of \$10 billion, if that's the right number, and say here's what we're going to build, any government that's really got it on their radar to do it, they would have in the fiscal forecast every year, whatever stage that's going to be done.

That's common in government, to say the first year we're going to put in \$40 million, \$50 million for the engineering and design, then the next four or five years are big construction years so we'll put in \$300 million or \$400 million until the project is finished.

But just to have that amount of money in the fiscal forecast and not have any in the outlying years, just shows that the intent was never there to build that hospital, unless it was in the budget. That's just the way government works, and we all know how we outline the fiscal – even building bridges. I know that from a bridge that's being built in Corner Brook, crossing over to the Bay of Islands. There's so much you put in for the engineering, so much for the second year, and then in the third and fourth year, that's when the major construction and the money is built in, in the budget, over the years. So next year that money is in the next year's budget, the following year's budget.

After looking at all this and looking at all the information provided, there's something personally, I think, that it wasn't really something that was on the radar for the government to do or they would have had it in last year's budget. That's what I think.

I'm not going to get into it, but when you look at how the land was purchased, right away there's an issue, people got their red flags up. I'm not going to get into that, but people got their red flags up. When you get your red flags up because of a purchase of something and says, oh, here's what we're going to do, and throws out this number, people are asking questions.

It is right – and say to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I remember many times in government when there were proposals that were put forth that they were going to have done, but they weren't put in the fiscal forecast; they were cancelled. So this is not uncommon. This is

not uncommon, for cancelling projects where it wasn't planned properly.

Where I encourage the minister and the government is to get proper analysis of what needs to be at St. Clare's. Get the proper analysis done. Because we can banter back and forth here because we're all fairly healthy. But the residents of St. John's and that area need that work done, need the hospital brought up to a good –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Newfoundland and Labrador.

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Newfoundland and Labrador.

**E. JOYCE:** Oh, Newfoundland and Labrador, yeah, whatever it is, 300 patients, whatever it is, and I agree, that's not an issue. But now, it's incumbent on the government to get the assessment done of what needs to be done to bring it up to an acceptable standard. And then once you get the assessment done, then carry out the work in a timely manner.

Because I am sure, I am more than confident that over the years that hospital has had maintenance completed in that hospital. I'm sure of it. It's just like the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital, 76 years old. Over the years, there's always work done. You walk in that building now, you would not know it's 76 years old.

The government at the time, last year, put in 45 new beds. So they weren't concerned of the age of the hospital; they were concerned of the condition of the hospital, and they made renovations. If you visit those suites now you would not say that hospital was 76 years old. Because the renovations were done, and I'll just explain again about those beds, it's because a lack of – I heard the Premier talk about it, who has a much better background in health care than I do. When you are talking about

the need, it is not acute-care beds; it's the long-term care beds.

And out of that 45 beds – and this is where I'm sure I'm going to be speaking about it to the Premier and to the Minister of Health. Out of those 45 beds, there were 45 taken out of acute-care beds, put in those 45 – put in 15. The other 15 were people who needed a few days recovery after surgery. The other 15 are people who are at home who need care. So this idea that there was 45 long-term care beds built at the old Western Memorial Regional is false. There's only 15 that moved out of there. Right now as we speak, there's up to about 48 to 54 long-term care patients in acute-care beds in Corner Brook.

So when the doctor's downstairs, which I know because I just have family members in the hospital who are down in the old physio room, just like you'd see when you see *M\*A\*S\*H*, all in the curtains, all like it because there's not enough acute-care beds. There's not enough acute-care beds because long-term care patients are in the beds.

So I can't support this because of, one, they're just saying because of the age. I look at other facilities that has been kept up. The second thing is because of lack of planning. Just to say that we're going to put – and I heard the figure and I don't even know where it came from – \$10 billion. If you look at \$10 billion with the cost of a hospital, \$832 million for 162 beds. Even if you doubled that, you're looking at \$2 billion. So I don't know where the \$10 billion came from, I have no idea, but that seems like a high amount for 300 beds in this province. That's just my opinion from dealing with the Corner Brook hospital.

I'm just taking this, again, an opportunity to urge the government, and I'll talk about my own situation out in Western Newfoundland, that we need long-term care beds. Even if you built – and there's a possibility, a very good possibility. You don't need to go into

this multi-million-dollar long term. Even if you build some extra bungalows where people that are not really ready to go into long-term care but they need some special help. In the bungalows, you could get five or six. If you built 10 or 15, 20 more bungalows, you could help a lot of patients right now who need long-term care, but they could live in the bungalows with supervision. They are out there now in Corner Brook. That was built alongside of the long-term care.

So I urge the minister and the Premier to look at that. That's an option for Corner Brook because it's a proven option already for the bungalows. In the long term, we definitely need extra long-term care beds in Corner Brook to make sure that acute-care beds are used for the reason that they're set up.

I have to say this before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, with a few family members that were in the hospital recently, once you get in the hospital, the care is unbelievable. The professionalism steps in and it was unbelievable.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**E. JOYCE:** This is no slight on any of the people who are working in the acute-care setting or in the long-term care setting because they are caring, loving individuals. I know it personally, in the last three or four months, from a few family members.

I just urge the government to look at that for the Corner Brook area and I could not and I will not be supporting this motion because of the lack of – I guess, the best way to put it, is that you can't build a \$10-billion facility on an envelope. You have to have some plan go through and without that proper planning and just using because it's 100 years old, I cannot support it because of that.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's a privilege to speak to this private Member's resolution today. I listened to the Minister of Health talk about the fact that long-term care is a very important part of the solution for health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. So I look forward to hearing more about that. I'm not a health care expert.

I do note, though, that the Throne Speech earlier this week did not include any mention of long-term care. So if that is the government's solution for health care in Newfoundland and Labrador, you know, I think the people in the province would want to hear about it.

I'd like to talk about the Facility Condition Indexes, Speaker. This is new to me and when the government counselled the new hospital, VOCCM reported that St. Clare's received an FCI rating, a Facilities Condition Index rating, of 53 per cent.

I've been looking into Facility Condition Index percents and so for a building like a hospital to have a condition index of 53 per cent, that means the cost to fix the building, the infrastructure including the HVAC, the plumbing, the electrical, is approximately 53 per cent of what it would cost to build a brand new facility. Fifty-three per cent indicates the facility is ending the end of its functional life and 53 per cent indicates a substantial capital investment would be required to bring it up to useable standards, Speaker.

These are kind of engineering standards of a facility condition report, and I understand that Eastern Health commissioned a Facility Condition Index report in 2023 and that St. Clare's had the worst physical condition of

any hospital in the province that was assessed during that assessment, Speaker.

To me, these are strong analytical, scientific measures that tell us that St. Clare's is not a good investment for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to invest taxpayers' hundreds of millions or whatever number, we don't know yet, to repair and replace St. Clare's. That's from their own work from the Facility Condition Index that has been published, and an FCI rating of 53 per cent, Speaker.

I think it's important to talk about the numbers. We've heard the Member say how would you pay for it, and Churchill Falls, Speaker, was the answer. Churchill Falls is how we would pay for the new hospital, and I would implore the Members, again, to continue working towards that. I'm sure they would love to have an extra billion dollars this spring – \$500 million for this year, \$500 million for last year – which they would be getting now if they signed the Memorandum Understanding and the tentative agreements.

So, Speaker, I do implore them to continue exploring – that's on the table already, and I hope pride doesn't get in the way of hundreds of billions of dollars for Newfoundland and Labrador on behalf of the government.

I do also want to talk about the Health Accord. The Health Accord is the pillar of – it's designed around having a tertiary hospital. We know that St. Clare's is our current tertiary hospital, Speaker, but the Health Sciences is not perfect. We've heard that this afternoon, Speaker. There are issues with the Health Sciences.

Since this came out – and I did come out right away on this issue, Speaker – I had tens of individuals, mostly health care workers, reach out to me, shocked by the suggestion that the government would be investing further in St. Clare's and no longer

building a new tertiary hospital for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I've also heard the argument about the chicken and egg, about building with no staff. I know that this government – and I hope this government is able to recruit health care professionals easily. I really do. I wish that on the government. We did everything that we possibly could; money was no object in recruiting health care professionals from around the world, Speaker.

**B. DAVIS:** And the auditor said it was working.

**S. STOODLEY:** Pardon – yes, and the Auditor General said it was working, Speaker.

So when you look at buildings, the facilities and the staff, I think an important part of work-life balance and people's working conditions is where they go to work. If you think about, let's say, a specialist – we have a lot of openings for specialist positions, Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador – if we're competing with a hospital in Montreal or the new multi-billion dollar hospital in Mississauga for a specialist, maybe we're not going to offer them double the pay; but let's say we're offering the same pay as the new hospital in Mississauga, and the option is maybe they come to St. Clare's and they're going to have a nice office in St. Clare's versus a brand new hospital in Mississauga, that makes a difference, Speaker.

The physical environment in which they work makes a big difference. For a short time I was Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and I was privileged to have that role when the new adult mental health facility opened. I toured that building on numerous occasions with the health care professionals in this province who designed, who made the wish lists, who executed the seamless move of patients, Speaker, and who did the whole project.

So they – sorry, Speaker, I'm getting easily distracted by the Members opposite.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**S. STOODLEY:** Sorry, Speaker.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Sorry for looking at you.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. STOODLEY:** Sorry, Speaker.

So when I spoke on numerous occasions with the staff of the new adult mental health facility, they gushed about how they put together a wish list and they got everything they asked for, Speaker, in the new facility. If you think about the old Waterford Hospital and the new facility, Speaker –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. STOODLEY:** Your success in speaking in this House should not be how well you can speak without tuning out the noise, Speaker, I have to say.

The staff gushed, Speaker, about how they got everything they asked for in terms of patient care and what would improve the mental health of people visiting the facilities. Anyone who visited the old Waterford Hospital and the new adult mental health facility can certainly understand how that physical condition and the physical building would have a significant and substantial impact on the outcome of the people who go to those facilities and to visit the hospital.

So I think if you asked the staff who work in our health care facilities what they think the impact of the facility on the patients is, Speaker, I think you will hear loud and clear from them on what impact that has on patient outcomes and health care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, I mentioned the new adult mental health facility, and some examples of that would be the dentistry suites. If you visit the dentistry suite in the old Waterford Hospital and the new dentistry suite in the new adult mental health facility, then you imagine what it would be like for someone to need dental work in the old Waterford Hospital situation and then the new adult mental health facility – night and day. The staff were gushing about how amazing and how proud they were and how much better and the improved outcomes that their patients will get from that physical environment, Speaker.

I would be remiss if I also didn't mention the other impacts of the new hospital, Speaker. With the new hospital, we would get roadways. We would get entrances and exits to Paradise, which are badly needed – a whole new infrastructure to connect the hospital to the Outer Ring Road. We had a plan that was public. I understand the government are now considering what to do with that and I would implore them, on behalf of the residents, to continue (inaudible.)

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. STOODLEY:** Speaker, I would also mention the water tower.

When I went door knocking in Elizabeth Park, in particular, during the election, I heard from resident after resident about the water pressure in their neighbourhood. Paradise needs more water pressure. I understand they will also need water pressure for the new high school that is being built in Paradise.

Our solution for that, Speaker, was a big water tower that would accommodate the new hospital; that would accommodate the residents of Paradise; that would also help Mount Pearl. So I'm really sad and disappointed that that is no longer in the

cards. Now we need to kind of revisit that whole situation.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It was never in the cards.

**S. STOODLEY:** The Member can say it wasn't in the cards, but I would say Churchill Falls MOU again.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity for speaking about this today, and I do implore the government to reconsider.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to use seven minutes of my time and yield it to the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, because cooperation is what we're about.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, I want to tell a story about Rick and Pam Collins within less than a minute.

Rick and Pam Collins, a couple who live on Cormack Place in George's Brook-Milton, they took a trip to the south coast of Italy and. The name of the island was called Ischia, which was close to Capri. I have no idea where they are, but that's what he said.

Anyway, Rick Collins tells a story that he was doing walking tours and his knee swelled up. It became very painful and he couldn't go on the walking tour so he told his wife, Pam, you can go ahead. I've got to find a health clinic, a hospital, which he did.

He found a hospital and, he said, his reaction was, he wasn't sure whether he should enter the building, not proposing that a building should be derelict. He wasn't sure, but he went into the building and he got checked in less than 10 minutes. He seen a general practitioner who said that his knee was, you know, obviously it needs to be seen to, had an X-ray with the swelling. Anyway, then they had an orthopedic surgeon come and draw the fluid from his knee, telling him when he gets back home, he needs to get his knee seen to because it's in such poor shape.

I tell you that story in less than one minute because I would say that, as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands said, it is not the building; it's the people that are inside the building that are offering the service. I want to be clear on the record that I don't ever wish for any building to be run down and not properly maintained, but it is the personnel that you've got inside that building that will be the most beneficial.

As the Minister of Finance, I gave a fall fiscal update. Came into the position and gave a fall fiscal update, the Leader of the Official Opposition gave me an F minus. The Leader of the –

**J. HOGAN:** I don't think it was an F minus.

**C. PARDY:** No, F. It was only an F.

The Leader of the Third Party thought I was disingenuous because I ought to have known about what the level of the debt was in the province. Now, keep in mind, that we were a little over \$300-million deficit when the budget came in 2025. Midsummer, a little over \$600 million was the deficit, but we had a shortfall.

When we brought in the fall fiscal update, it was \$948 million. I would say that is concerning. I stand here raising my hand that I was surprised at the amount of debt. That I expected somewhere around \$650

million, maybe. Not what it came in on. It did.

Then the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands states if there was no planning to the hospital, if there was no planning or forecast, then I'm not going to vote for it, he said – the amendment – in so many words. I would agree with him, because there was nothing in the projected forecast, or nothing budgeted on the hospital. We weren't even too sure how much it was, but the estimation was between \$12 billion and \$14 billion.

I would say to you, everyone on the opposite side would know that at the end of March 31, 2025, when we had the budget – your budget – came in, we had a debt load of \$8.4 billion. That debt load rose to the fall update, when we came in, to \$20 billion.

What we often don't have track of is that the province's debt expense is \$1.1 billion – the debt expenses that we have. The officials would tell me that if we had the hospital on \$14 billion, it would have increased the debt expenses by 70 per cent. I would say to you, you can't spend money you don't have.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**C. PARDY:** So the Member for Mount Scio stood up a little while ago and said if only you had the MOU, if you can go past the MOU, it gives every impression that your government before us was spending money that you never had and that is not the way we ought to be doing it. I would say that, if that was the only thing that we never had operationalized and in the fiscal budget, that might not be so bad. But if that was a pattern of some other stuff that there was no forecast for, the announcement, nothing operationalized, that's a problem – that's a problem.

So I'm saying you can announce something that when you do, and if you haven't go the finances for it, I would say we've got Bay du Nord and Bay du Nord will come in, but

we're not going to be spending wildly in the budget to do that until the Bay du Nord comes in, the funds.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**C. PARDY:** So anyway, I will say the recruitment and retention of health care that was started, that is sound. We have got to have our professions in our places. But, again, the bottom line is that to provide for health care, it's not only the building.

I yield my time, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for Bonavista for yielding some time. He's one of my favourites over on the other side; I've got to be honest. You know, the list is getting less but he's one of my favourites over there. But I do want to say thank you for yielding the time, and I do want to thank every Member for the opportunity that did get up and speak because I do tend to learn from every Member that do get up to speak, whether I agree or disagree with what they have to say.

But what we are talking about here with this PMR is about replacing a facility that has serviced not only my district and the neighbouring districts that are included in St. John's, but the entire province. That facility, if you haven't had the ability, I encourage every Member to go visit the facility. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit, it needs work. There's no doubt about that.

I'm not standing here and saying to you that we could have done a better job at maintaining it. All facilities in this province,

absolutely, every government should take credit and also some of the blame for not maintaining some of the facilities in this province. But what I can say is that we had the ability to build not one hospital or not one long-term care facility, but multiple. We built Corner Brook Regional Hospital in the time frame we were here. We built two, 60-bed facilities in Central Newfoundland, one Gander, one in Grand Falls-Windsor. We built the 20 protective beds in Botwood. We built eight long-term care beds in St. Anthony and all of those are great investments and many, many more besides we would love to do.

I think that we get caught up in it – and I will agree with the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, who just spoke a little while ago, that the number seems high. We just built a hospital not that long ago for under a billion dollars and if you doubled that or even tripled it or quadrupled it, you're still not up to – I can't really understand where the numbers are coming from. It was \$8 billion when there was an interview. There was \$10 billion after that. Today, it was \$12 billion or \$14 billion this morning. By the time we finish the debate here at 5, it will probably be somewhere around \$16 billion, \$18 billion.

I don't know where the numbers are and I don't think you on the other side know where the numbers are either because it hasn't finished that whole process – it hasn't finished that whole process. We said the planning for this hospital is starting. We put money in the budget for the planning. That's not uncharacteristic for planning of a school or hospital.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**B. DAVIS:** There was for the planning of the hospital.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the hon. Member to please address the Chair.

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the protection; I really appreciate it.

My mother always said, it's great – we were blessed in life by being given two ears and only one mouth. I wish that was the same case that'd we'd listen twice as much as we talk.

From my standpoint, I'm very disappointed that the hon. Members on the other side of the House are not moving forward with this. I think it's a problem for our community; it's a problem for our entire province. We've seen – and I'm not disagreeing with the Premier who stood on his feet earlier and said that long-term care is an issue; we agree. That's why we've invested in some long-term care when we were there. Do we need to do more or should we have done more? Absolutely, we always would want to do more.

Any time you're impacting families and want to improve on that, you want to do that; but many of the concerns that we're talking about here, about St. Clare's, are things that have changed, even after COVID, but in the last couple of decades. We don't have private rooms for people. The Corner Brook Regional Hospital has more of that, which is what we need.

All of our constituents are asking for those things, just like many of us in this House of Assembly have had the option of hearing people say many, many times that I can't believe that the hospital is not being moved forward. I'm not suggesting we had to build the entire campus. There could've been a tower. There could've been a portion moved forward to bring stuff forward. What we need to be looking at is for the betterment of the people of the province. We should always be looking at that, not who made the initial announcement.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm trying to listen to the hon. Member.

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that I think is most interesting is when governments turn – and it always happens. It always happens, governments are defeated and new governments come in with new ideas. But one thing that I always thought and I was always proud of in our democratic system in Canada and everything else is that you tend to build upon the successes of the previous administration, however many there was, to build on those and then create your own path too. Many of the ideas that have come forward, they've agreed with, the Health Accord.

**K. RUSSELL:** (Inaudible.)

**B. DAVIS:** The hon. Member for Lake Melville will get plenty of opportunity to speak on his own time. I'd like it not to be during mine.

At the end of the day, most of the time that we spend in this House of Assembly is building upon everything else that previous people have done. You've always heard the statement of standing upon the shoulders of those who went before.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. DAVIS:** That's what I think every government should always try to build upon. What I've seen in the first 135 or so days is a lot of cancellations, a lot of cuts and a lot of people walked out the door for doing a very good job at what they've talked about today, in health care.

We've talked about, many times, of the skill set of health care workers we have. There was an architect of the Health Accord that wrote the Accord, the author of it, or one of them, that was walked out the door for the experience level there, that was building

stuff forward that people are talking about all the time.

I know that I had my time yielded. Thank you to the Member for Bonavista for being such a collegial individual. Thank you for that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** I now call upon the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair to close the debate.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I want to thank everybody who stood today in their place representing their respective districts. For the most part, the tone was pretty good and this was a good debate, I think. We put a PMR on the floor and we heard a lot of different aspects.

I do want to say, Speaker, in particular today, there was a lot of talk about acute-care beds and long-term care beds.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** I want to say to the Minister of Health, and very respectfully I want to say this, I want her to talk to her staff when she goes back about long-term care beds and acute-care beds. Because I did hear her recently say that the hospital delays are due to patients awaiting long-term care placements. This is true, Speaker, in rural. That is true, but it is not the primary driver in Metro.

We've heard Dr. Pat Parfrey speak publicly about that, the now sadly former CEO of NL Health Services. He stated clearly that the shortage of acute-care beds is at the root of paramedic off-load delays, and we heard the Premier allude to that issue a little bit earlier today.

Our province needs more acute-care beds and, Speaker, renovation of the same footprint certainly does not significantly expand that capacity. I'd be remiss, I suppose, if I sat down and didn't mention, so much talk here today on the floor of long-term care beds, I'm surprised there was no mention of that in the Speech from the Throne.

Also, Speaker, there was a lot of talk about cost, and a lot of different figures tossed around. I don't know, when we look at the mental health facility down the road, just over \$300 million, when we look at that huge hospital in Corner Brook on the West Coast, came in under \$1 billion, I don't know where those figures are coming from: \$10 billion, \$12 billion, \$14 billion.

There's a hospital that was recently built in Ontario, 950 beds – I think it was almost three million square feet – serving a population of 2.2 million people, more than four times the size of this whole province. I just think somebody got Mississauga mixed up with Mount Pearl. That's the only thing I can figure out there in that.

Anyway, in conclusion, the Conservative government cancelled a generational health care project in less than 100 days.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, they cancelled a generational health care project in less than 100 days without tabling a feasibility study, without releasing a cost-benefit analysis and without proving that renovation is the better option.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**L. DEMPSTER:** I'm shouting, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** I'm sorry. I can't hear myself think here.

They asked the people of this province –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** – simply take their word for it. But when 100-year-old facility like St. Clare's Mercy Hospital has a critical infrastructure rating, has documented safety concerns and clear acute-care capacity pressures, Speaker, trust us is not good enough.

I want to ask my colleagues on the other side, if the numbers justify your decision, table them. If renovation is truly cheaper and better, prove it. I'm speaking on behalf of the people. Until then, this looks less, Speaker, like fiscal prudence and it looks more like short-sighted decision making that risks the future of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. Those are just some of the reasons that we will be voting in favour of this PMR today, my team.

Since I've got a couple of minutes left on the clock, I want to say, there was some reference today –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, now the government wants us to talk about the time they ended up voting against their own PMR, but don't I want to use my last five minutes to talk about that. I do want to say, in terms of health care people ask me all the time about the challenges, the direction we're moving, and I have to throw another

bouquet to Dr. Pat Parfrey and the work he did.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**L. DEMPSTER:** I do know that the Premier is aware of those numbers and would have got a briefing back in October. While overall vacancies are nearing normal levels, recruitment and retention challenges do continue. The Health Minister speaks about it; I'm aware of it, too, in the areas that I represent. It's more compounded in rural. But, Speaker, registered nurses, vacancies have declined; nurse practitioners, vacancies have declined; licensed practical nurses, vacancies have declined; personal care attendants, vacancies have declined; licensed physicians, increased; diversion hours, decreased.

Huge numbers – I'm not going to get into the numbers; I don't have time. I just want to say that we want to encourage the government with a little bit of planning, with a staggered approach. Don't put a Band-Aid solution on something as important as health care for the people that entrusted us to represent them. This is, I think, non-partisan when it comes to health. We all need to work together and find a solution to have a better provincial hospital built over a period of time.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

**Division**

**SPEAKER:** Are the House Leaders ready for the vote?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes.

**SPEAKER:** Yes.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

**TABLE OFFICER (Beazley):** John Hogan, Lisa Dempster, Bernard Davis, Sarah Stoodley, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Pam Parsons, Keith White, Paul Pike, Elvis Loveless, Fred Hutton, Jamie Korab, Jim Parsons, Betina Ford, Michael King.

**SPEAKER:** All those against the motion, please rise.

**TABLE OFFICER:** Tony Wakeham, Lloyd Parrott, Joedy Wall, Lela Evans, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Paul Dinn, Craig Pardy, Barry Petten, Jeff Dwyer, Loyola O'Driscoll, Andrea Barbour, Chris Tibbs, Lin Paddock, Pleaman Forsey, Mike Goosney, Keith Russell, Riley Balsom, Hal Cormier, Mark Butt, Jim McKenna, Joe Power, James Dinn, Eddie Joyce.

**CLERK (Hawley George):** Speaker, the ayes: 14; the nays: 23.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The motion has been defeated.

It being Wednesday, in accordance with Standing Order 9, the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 5 at 1:30 p.m.