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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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(Night Sitting)

The House resumed at 6:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 1.

SPEAKER: We are still speaking to the subamendment.

The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd just like to say what an honour it is to be able to stand in this House again this evening and talk on behalf of the people of Burin - Grand Bank. It's always a pleasure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: I think I should start this evening by thanking all the Members of this hon. House for standing up today and giving a standing ovation to those athletes from my district. It shows we're unified. It shows that we have people coming in from rural Newfoundland, some of these kids probably only get in here two or three times in their lives, and they were so excited when we brought them into the House. The Speaker was here as well. When we brought them into the House, they were in awe, Speaker, and they certainly appreciated it. They were very polite and so on. So thank you to all my colleagues here this evening. It was really appreciated, it was very touching and it's something that I certainly would have no issue in standing for anybody in this House.

The first thing I'm going to touch on tonight is health care. When I talked about health care previously, I talked about the fact that in St. Lawrence we haven't had emergency services for a long time, no emergency health care and no emergency doctors. We were hoping when the election was on,

Speaker, we were told that we're going to be brought up in staff, there are going to be doctors and lots of nurses and so on. So I'm really excited about that and I hope that that happens sooner rather than later.

One of the things that we have to bear in mind is in St. Lawrence and surrounding areas – because that hospital serves four or five communities in the area – we have the mine that's operating now in St. Lawrence, it's a fluorspar mine. St. Lawrence sits upon the highest deposit of fluorspar in North America and the highest grade. The geology of the area allows them to find veins pretty much on a monthly basis.

But having said that, health care becomes more important because we are now bringing more people into the community. Right now, or within the next little while, there will be about 300 people working at that mine. That's a lot. As a matter of fact, I understand from talking to some of the people in St. Lawrence last weekend, the mine is now looking at – because there is no housing available – putting up a camp out there. It won't be a fly in, but a drive in and drive out camp.

I guess the other thing that I might want to mention as well, and I have a whole list of little things that I want to talk about, is the student employment in rural Newfoundland. I'm hoping that the first brush with students is over and that we will see some more in the very near future. Some communities didn't get any at all and that's hard on those communities.

The reason why students are so important in rural Newfoundland is that, as I've said before, our kids have to leave the community. At 18 years old, they have to leave the community, and it's a great help to parents if they could somehow get work during the summer and be able to help with rent and other costs associated with attending post-secondary education. So I live in hope and I'm hoping that we will be

able to get some more students in the District of Burin - Grand Bank.

The Finance Minister today talked about thresholds and, of course, over the last number of years, including this year and this government, a lot of work is being done with seniors, a lot of work is getting done to help our seniors. But one thing that we can do and we have to still continue to look at is thresholds. I'm still hearing from seniors that are just over the threshold and can't get into seniors housing. That in itself is something that we have to work at. We have to look at thresholds and we're going to have to make sure that seniors are able to leave their homes, which are much too big, and let's hope the domino effect happens where you have seniors sell their homes to new families and move into seniors' cottages. I think that was our plan right from the start.

I brought this up in Estimates the other night, I had an elderly gentleman call me, his wife has dementia and she had to go into a home but, in the meantime, she was in hospital and he couldn't take her home. They couldn't get home care. So what happened was she stayed in the hospital until a bed became available for her in a long-term care facility. He didn't realize it at the time, but if you go into this holding pattern and you have to stay in a hospital bed for a period of time, it's \$39 per day. She was in there for a couple of months. Finally, she got out and she was able to go to St. Lawrence, but he got a bill for that length of time. He said there's no way I can afford it; I can't do it.

Then he tells me that it's a 40-kilometre drive for him to see his wife. He says, I have to go up every day. We were together all our lives, I can't go a day without going to see her, she misses me so I go every day. Every day he gets in his car and he drives to St. Lawrence where the long-term care facility is. He says when she went into the hospital, the income that she was getting goes now to pay for her to be in hospital. So now he said, all of a sudden, I'm cut back to

one income and I can't afford to be driving back and forth all the time, especially with the cost of gas and the state of the roads in that particular section, because he said I can't afford to lose any parts off my car or anything. So he's in a bit of a predicament.

When I heard that and got his story, and he was really upset, emotionally upset, and like he said, I need to see her every day, I have to be there, she depends on me to come in, that's the way he feels, to feed her and be with her and so on, but he said I can't afford it. I can't afford it now.

I think there's some way we need to look at that as well. When we talked about it in Estimates the other night, the Minister of Seniors indicated that he certainly would look into that situation, just to see if there's anything we can do about it.

As you know, I've been going on about roads. You'll be happy to know my last roadwork petition was today. I'm moving into something else after that, but the roadwork in my area has got to get done. All I've asked of the minister – I haven't asked him for any funding or anything – is that he send out his officials and see what in the name of God I'm talking about. That's all I ask; go out and have a look at it. See if you can do anything with it. If you can, fine. If not, well, let's put it on a list for the following year. Let's do something like that.

The whole idea about the Grand Bank situation, where the Premier and the candidate at the time promised to open up the RCMP detachment in Grand Bank, that was to the delight of everybody on the Burin Peninsula. I'm telling you now, it was a big hit. I was going to vote against myself. It was a big hit because we figured that this government is going back to rural policing. That meant that all of the detachments that were closed are now going to open.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, not happening.

P. PIKE: But that's what we thought. As naive as we were, that's what we thought, because we would have had three more detachments on the Burin Peninsula. I think that's the way to go. I really do.

I haven't been told that it's not going to happen, it's just that people are speculating. I certainly will be there to the grand opening of the RCMP detachment in Grand Bank, I can guarantee you that, and I will shake the hand of the minister.

Volunteers – I have to talk about volunteers because it's really becoming difficult to get volunteers now. Just the other day I was asked to go to a meeting. I couldn't go because I was in the House, but it was a meeting on Come Home Year. Now, Come Home Years are so important to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Town of St. Lawrence has one every five years. Every five years we have a Come Home Year. We love them.

The next one is in 2027. In 2022, we had one and it was a huge success. The theme was Let's Paint the Town Blue in 2022. Because the colours of St. Lawrence are royal blue, of course, for soccer.

Getting volunteers now is more difficult than ever, and we have to value our volunteers. When I was minister responsible for the volunteer sector, when I met with volunteers, I certainly took the time to make sure that they knew how much we valued them as a government. We did value them as a government.

What I'm just saying is that we need to ensure that we look at organizations such as 50-plus clubs, such as Lions Clubs, such as Legions and so on to try and maintain people in positions. Lions Clubs are the lifeline to a lot of rural communities in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are – and Kinsmen. There are so many – Kinettes and Legionnaires.

At the funeral, yesterday, there was probably 30 or 35 Legionnaires there – all proud, all dressed and I was so proud. I told the Legion in Lawn a little while ago, that as soon as I retire from politics, I'm joining the Legion. I'm joining the Legion because it's an important organization. We have to keep the memories alive and it's something I firmly believe in. I had family that lost their lives in both wars and I have family that served in both wars. I intend to join the Legion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not yet.

P. PIKE: Not yet, but I intend to. If for nothing else, to help.

One of the things that I really wanted to talk about today, as well, is the Education Accord and its recommendations. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it, but we did approach this with the minister about the Education Accord and when will that be rolled out, or if it was going to be rolled out at all.

I think it's a great document, personally. I've had an opportunity to read through it. I like the recommendations and I think it's something that can guide the future of education in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. There was no mention of it in the budget. I was kind of waiting to see what was going to come out of it in Estimates. In Estimates, as well, the minister indicated that they're still working on it.

Now, I know there were some problems with this document, but I assumed, since this was released, that you had time to cleanse it, if there were any AI issues or whatever. So I'm just wondering when the rollout is on this.

It's a very, very good piece of work. When I looked at the transparency and so on that we talk about in other studies and so on, in this particular one, there was 121 organizations and people from various

departments and so on that worked on this document – 121, amazing.

In the document, at the end, each person put their name forward. They were permitted to put their name forward, what their profession was and whether they were university professors or people with the Department of Education and so on. They put their names forward so that they wanted to be transparent. They wanted to make sure that if we had questions, we could go to them and ask. I thought, 121, so they had 38 people on an advisory board and three of those were co-chairs.

In Early Learning and Childhood Development, they had two co-chairs and 13 committee members. On Educational Engagement and the Transformational Committee, they had 31 committee members and two co-chairs. Health and Well-Being, they had two co-chairs and 15 committee members. Post-Secondary Education, they had three co-chairs and 12 committee members.

These people came from all sources. It was the Department of Education, Department of Health. It was Memorial University. It was schools, teachers, parents, Indigenous education advisory committees. There were so many people involved in this document. It's a good document and I would ask government to look at it very seriously as we try to chart the course of the future of education in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's so important.

I know I have hon. colleagues in this House that have education backgrounds, I'm sure they've had a chance to look at it. I like it. I've talked to teachers across the province, they're hoping that this is going to move forward. So let's have a look at it. I don't think we need to spend a lot of time now. Once it's cleansed it should be okay.

A couple of other things I wanted to mention, as well, is that the budget does not address the issue when it comes to the

early childhood educator workforce. I think we need to delve into that. I think we need to look at investments in wages, access to pensions, paid sick leave, recruitment and retention. Recruitment and retention is important in every which way, especially in education, by the way. Expanding child care spaces without supporting educators' need to staff them is not sustainable. We need to look at that and it's so important that we have these educators.

I guess it's important, as well, I mentioned retention. Retention is key to anything, getting people to stay. I talked to a person a while ago and the person said, I'm just starting social work. I said, oh great, what's the plan, to stay in the province? Oh yes. I said and work? Only in health care. But we need them in other areas. We need them in other areas as well.

The NLTA says there are significant gaps in the budget. They're disappointed that there is no increase in allocations for school counsellors. That's very important. There are schools now in my district that don't have guidance counsellors and so on but they're using those units to help in classrooms but you really need them as counsellors.

Instructional resource teachers, IRT teachers, so important; school psychologists, very difficult to get; speech language pathologists and specialized supports. He says no increase in allocations for school administrators; no meaningful and targeted action to address retention and recruitment of certified teachers. Memorial University, MUNFA president says, budget does not close the gap in ensuing students can get the courses and supports they need to succeed.

Of course, that's their opinion right now and I'm sure that will change as time unfolds and so on, but a lot of people want to have a say in what's happening with the budget, a lot of people want to talk about the budget, but there are so many things that

we really need to ensure that we work on as time moves forward.

In my Estimates with the Minister of Education, which went great, I must say, and with the Minister of Seniors, both Estimates went great, but, still, we really need to work on other areas in the budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to once again stand in this House and represent the good folks from Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

If I'm not mistaken, we need to debate the budget, basically, for about 75 hours, through Estimates and everything else, it gives us an opportunity to discuss, in detail. Some days it seems much longer than that and others it seems like it's zooming by. Kind of like life, if you will.

When I was thinking about the budget a couple of days ago, when I spoke to the amendment, I mentioned how, through my career in media, I had covered maybe 30 budgets, maybe 31, I'm not sure, I couldn't figure it out. The amount of math in terms of how much time I'd spent up in the press gallery versus down here as a Member on this side and on the other side, I think it's safe to say, at this point, after five sessions, I've surpassed the amount of time down here than compared to upstairs.

The first time I came to the House of Assembly as a reporter back in 1990, it was actually upstairs. The House of Assembly was on the top floor, basically. Much smaller than this. There were big, heavy curtains. It was a very dark area.

When I first went to work at NTV in 1990, some people in this room may be old enough to remember the name Jim Thoms, he was the legislative reporter and Lynn Burry was also covering the leg, as we called it at that point in time. They would sort of pass it back and forth, depending on what was going on, and at the time it was quite different in terms of the coverage. There was no social media.

When I first went to NTV, there was no word processing. If you wrote a story and wanted to change the second paragraph, you had to delete everything and go back. Very soon after that, we did get word processors, thankfully.

I can remember being upstairs on the big day when Clyde Wells was the premier, at that point in time, and he said, famously: We're not going to roll the dice during the Meech Lake Accord. Just about every reporter in the province was upstairs in the lobby. It's similar to where we do our scrums right now, a little bit smaller and there was a spiral staircase on the end that went up to the press gallery. At that point in time, smoking had just been banned from the Confederation Building but there were still remnants of people who smoked. I think there were still people who may have been having the odd dart here and there in the House of Assembly – not actually in here, but in the hallways or tucked away somewhere. It was very different back then.

But I can remember that night and the focus and the national media had all come here. Of course, there were two key players, aside from, obviously, the prime minister at the time. One of them was Elijah Harper, the MLA in Manitoba, and Clyde Wells, of course. This constitutional change was hinged on these two people.

Harper said no, Clyde Wells said no and, of course, there was this huge media uproar. John Crosbie was out in the lobby. He was not very happy with what had happened because he was a Member of the Mulroney

Cabinet at that point in time and he was down here trying to convince the Liberals at that point to go along with what Brian Mulroney was proposing with respects to the Constitution.

I can remember those early days. I can remember that at that point in time, you could literally walk in the front door of the Confederation Building out here, get on the elevators – the very same elevators – and go right to the eight floor, the Premier's office. When you get off now, I think it's opened still, but there are pictures of all the Premiers, but there used to be a big desk there, a receptionist. There were no locks. You could just go up and ask to see the Premier, if you're a reporter. Normally, you would call and arrange it, but anybody from off the street could walk up there.

Of course, after security issues around the world, 9/11 and all this, security at public buildings like this, thankfully, we feel more secure. But you could literally go right up to any minister's office and go right in. It was pre-huge comms departments. There were people who did that job, sort of on the side of their desk. But in the early '90s, that's when that evolved, and even the RNC evolved into having somebody who was their spokesperson to now, you have a full comms team, as every department does, as the Opposition does, and the NDP. It's part of the life that we live right now. Social media, of course, that's another story for another day.

But you could literally walk right in here and go anywhere and talk to whomever you wanted and ask for an interview or talk to somebody to try to get information. That's how you would source things. You weren't texting people at that point in time or DMing them on Facebook to see if you could find out what was going on in departments.

I always took this lesson with me from a call I made one morning. Of course, when I worked at NTV, we would do a lunchtime newscast at 12 and then another one at 6

o'clock in the evening. Sometimes you would listen to the radio in the morning. There were different sources. Radio and newspaper were how sometimes we'd steal stories, if you will, or try to advance them, if you knew some information. There is no deadline now in news. When something happens, it's online immediately. You don't break a story very often at 6.

I can remember hearing something on the radio, and I think it was Ed Roberts was the Justice minister. I can't remember the story but, anyway, I picked up the phone at around 9, once I got into the office and expecting somebody to answer the phone – hello, Department of Justice. I said: It's Fred Hutton. I would like to leave a message for the minister of Justice about an interview I'd like to do today. He said: Speaking.

This is about 8:55 in the morning. I said: Oh. He said: You sound surprised. I said: Well, yes, I wasn't expecting the minister to pick up the phone. He said: Well, it rang, so I picked it up. Contrary to popular belief, we work around here. We do work.

I remembered that. I was thinking about the story that my colleague from Gander just said about someone inadvertently going into a hotel room and Brian Peckford was getting a shave while she was trying to get some kind of a mortgage done with somebody else, the actual MHA or the MP helping them with whatever it was and the accessibility was completely different.

Fast-forward to almost the end of that year on December 24 of 1990. I say this jokingly somewhat to the Minister of Energy and Mines and as well to the Premier, my involvement in the 1969 Churchill Falls agreement, the one time I met Joey Smallwood in person. I had seen him but actually met him on this day. Media from all over the country were there, again, on Roaches Line in his house for his 90th birthday. He was as old as the century.

When we went out on December 24 of that day, he was not communicating the same way that he would have in the past. He'd lost his ability to speak as well as he could in previous years, as he was getting on in age. I remember getting to go downstairs in that house on Roaches Line and the documents that he had there. It was literally like something from The Rooms – not as curated and organized as The Rooms would be, but the documents that were there were amazing.

That was my one encounter with Joey Smallwood when he was 90 years old. We literally had a newscast live on the air that night at 6 because by the time we drove back from Roaches Line, edited the story together – we were permitted sometimes on Christmas Eve to pretape our show, but we didn't that year. I remember it. I was very young. I didn't care – no kids, not married and my mom was still going to be cooking my supper for me, so I didn't have to take care of that.

It was interesting to get to see those types of things throughout a career and it's interesting to be here now and to think about what they had been doing back in the day of either Joey's day or 30 years ago, my colleague also mentioned Wince Baker. I interviewed him many times, Winston Baker as the former Finance minister. I was surprised, later on in life, to learn that he had moved on after a really good career in politics and whatever he had done prior to that and was working at a Home Depot or a Canadian Tire or something in Ontario, as a retirement gig, because he didn't want to be bored. He went on to do something else just to keep himself busy.

I was also thinking about some of these past stories that I had covered in the past and just as I was coming into the main stream media, the Hughes Inquiry was just wrapping up and that was one of the dark clouds over Newfoundland and Labrador, the Catholic Church sex scandal. Interestingly, within the last few weeks, we

hear about settlements that are still taking place, from people who were abused 40 or more years ago. I know that there is government involvement in some of this, as people try to move on after many, many years.

I just keep thinking about these different aspects of all the decisions that are made here and that were made 30 years ago or 36 years ago when I first started covering news, to here we are now. I've said this before in media and I'll say it again for this House, for the record. I don't think that Joey Smallwood, in 1969, signed that agreement thinking that it would be as lopsided as it was. I don't think there was intention.

I similarly have said this in interviews that I don't think Danny Williams or others who were involved signed those agreements for Muskrat Falls thinking that we would be in the predicament that we're in with the cost overruns and the amount of money that is involved and what we have to pay every year.

It brings me to a comment – and many people have said this, but I think it was when I was actually listening to the Member Placentia West - Bellevue and he talked about the other day, in his commentary on it, about how Muskrat Falls, we own it. Yes, we do own it.

As a matter of fact, it is my opinion that we are very lucky to still own it. Because we were at a point in time, just a few short years ago, where we almost had to give it back. Mom and Dad had cosigned the loan and we couldn't pay it. Ottawa did step in and Ottawa stepped in to help with rate mitigation, to allow us to pay that money, to make sure that electricity rates for average homeowners, that they don't have to pay that extra money. So that \$300 bill doesn't go to \$526.

Again, I've expressed this before that my fear is that we need to move quickly now, because three years can zip by, as you

know, and, all of a sudden, we will not have a rate mitigation plan and we will need to have something there. That was one of the aspects of the urgency of wanting to make sure that we could try to get to a definitive agreement, if we could.

Again, I will say, I would never have signed something that I didn't think was going to be a good deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't think anybody in here would. I don't want somebody else standing here in 40 years talking about me, who've they've never met me or talking about the Finance Minister or the Leader of the Opposition or any Member, how something went terribly wrong, again, a third time on the Churchill River. Nobody would want that.

The fact is we do own it and the problem with it is that it's expensive. It's really expensive to own. It's going to be expensive for a very long time. Once it's paid off, my grandkids will probably enjoy the fruits of it, I hope.

That's one of the things that I think about with respect to Muskrat Falls. I've heard others mention as well, we do own it. But I think there was a point in time where we may have almost had to give it back.

I'm thinking about my own district now as well, to sort of change course here. In the last 2½ years, I've spent an awful lot of time on Bell Island. Bell Island, of course, has a huge history with the iron ore mines. When I went there, back in December, of 2023, to start actively campaigning, the first thing I heard was about the ferry – and we'll talk about that in a second. The second thing was about the condition of roads.

There had been no pavement from the provincial government on Bell Island in more than 10 years – nothing. Some cold patch and some potholes were filled and the Town of Wabana did some work over there, obviously, on their municipal roads, but the provincial roads that were there were

untouched. Noting had gone over in 10 years.

So we managed to get, I think, in a two-year period, about almost 10 kilometres of roads repaired and repaved. When you think about a community that hosts upwards of almost 20,000 people a year in the tourism industry, when you go somewhere, if you're bringing your trailer or your truck or if you're going over just in a rental car and you end up having to fix a flat, or a rim gets bent or busted, the likelihood of you going back is not great and you're also probably going to put it on Facebook or on Twitter or X or whatever and complain a little bit.

I'm happy to say that there's better infrastructure over there now. There's still work to do, small communities face challenges.

I got a call from them today that one of the engines in their firetruck is gone. Small community about 2,000 people and they have to come up with hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, maybe close to a million dollars to fix a firetruck – pardon me, \$100,000. The question is do you fix the truck or do you buy a new one? Where are you getting the money? Where are you getting \$700,000 to fix – and it's the main truck. These are the challenges that are faced unexpectedly by smaller communities.

I know that Portugal Cove-St. Philip's just decided to purchase a new truck. It will be hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars. They've gone up \$300,000 or \$400,000 in the last five or seven years, about \$400,000.

Similarly, I'm sure that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure has heard about the cost increases for the equipment that's needed to buy paving equipment. We hear about the 10,000 kilometres of paved road that we have in our province and it's a lot to try to do, to snow clear and to pave

and to it keep clear and safe for people to drive on and to generate the economy.

When I travelled around Newfoundland and Labrador when I was working with the Premier, you go to places that you don't realize that there are 300 trucks a day that go across it with fish products or with logs, hundreds of trucks going back and forth on a weekly basis.

Our ferry system, again to go back to Bell Island really quickly, the Bell Island ferry system transports more people and cars on a yearly basis than Marine Atlantic does across the Gulf from North Sydney to Port aux Basques and Argentia, a lot more, because it's basically a commuter service as well as a system that allows people to get across to Portugal Cove and get to, if not their work, to whatever appointments they may have, if the medical services they need are not available at the hospital or the clinic on Bell Island. Obviously, treatments for cancer, dialysis, these people are coming back and forth all the time. I'm going to be talking about that, actually, a little bit later in the week.

I was very encouraged to remember after the election that this government had promised to acquire four new ferries, perhaps lease one and build three more. There was no costing done on it, so we still don't know, but for a point of reference, if you're looking at something similar to the size of the *Legionnaire* or the *Veteran*, the ferries that provide service to Bell Island, as well to Change Islands and Fogo Islands, they were about \$51 million each back in 2013 – 2015-ish is when they came into service and one came in in 2016, but the prices were based on 2013. So if you're looking to build something similar in size to that today – I have no idea, but I know it will be more than \$51 million per boat.

Now, if it's a swing vessel that's smaller – and I know that the minister in his RFP had said that it had to be somewhat comparable

to the *Legionnaire* or *Veteran*, but not the same size.

By the way, Minister, I should mention to you that the folks who live on Bell Island, all have contacted me to say how much they appreciate having the *Kamutik* going back and forth. It is a boat that, I think, is larger than is needed for the service, but it has certainly provided a great service over the last little while to them. They're looking forward, though, to having the *Legionnaire* back and the *Flanders* on that run through the summer, which we're hoping is going to be a really banner year for tourism with the mine and all the other sites to see over there.

Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude there, but I will say that I am looking forward to hearing more about the ferries. If you left here now and the boat was leaving, you could be on Bell Island 45 minutes from now, if it was ready to leave. It's a gem that's there. We do need to have that access, though. It also has to be there for people who rely on it on a daily basis.

I'm interested to see what the fiscal analysis is going to be. It's not in this budget, so I guess we have to wait until next year to see how much money is actually going to be spent on this, how much it's going to cost and whether or not we will actually see a swing vessel brought into service in 2026.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Always an honour to stand and speak to legislation. This is the budget time of the year and, as we know, it's the same process each and every year at this time in spring. It's late-night sitting here in the House of Assembly. As my colleague mentioned,

there's a mandatory number of hours that this budget has to be debated and so on, and, yeah, here we are.

Of course, always a pleasure to represent the people of the Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District.

With that said, being springtime, being budget time, it's also preparing for the tourism season, especially in my district. We just kicked off this last week with Bay Roberts's annual Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival. It was the 13th annual. Again, that event grows and grows and expands each and every year and I think everybody has a great time. Also pleased to work with the department and to get that continued funding that's been given each and every year, of course, for that seafood festival. As well, we entertain, of course, my colleague, the Minister of Tourism was out, and she enjoyed her time, I think, in Bay Roberts at the festival last week. There's going to be much more happening.

Also, recently, we just celebrated – and, Speaker, you would know, and I think the province was paying attention – the Amelia Earhart statue. As we know, about a year ago at this time, that statue disappeared in the wee hours, in darkness, as we know. It's not funny. People were disappointed and sad and even scared that such an act could have happened.

As we know, Amelia Earhart has a very, very significant history with aviation history in Harbour Grace and helped put Harbour Grace on the map for aviation. Almost 100 years ago, in the '30s, she took off from the historic airstrip. I encourage you to make the trip out there. We've got the Harbour Grace Regatta coming up –

SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

P. PARSONS: Yeah, the Harbour Grace Regatta.

Are you going out this weekend?

SPEAKER: I was there this weekend.

P. PARSONS: You were? Perfect.

The annual Harbour Grace Regatta, which is actually the second oldest continuing sporting event in North America, second to the Royal St. John's Regatta. It's a bit ordeal at Lady Lake every year. So I certainly encourage you, Speaker, and my colleagues and anyone to make that historic excursion around the bay.

There's lots to see out there. Come out and see Amelia. It is the original statue. A big thanks to Morgan MacDonald for the work of putting her back together. It's good to see her there in her rightful place there in Harbour Grace next to the Spirit of Harbour Grace airplane, which was donated by the Pike family who continues to contribute to our community.

Of course, the *SS Kyle*, which is adjacent there in the harbour. That's a sight to see. Obviously, that's been there quite some time, before I was born. I went to school in Harbour Grace, at the then school, St. Columba, and every time we'd drive by in the bus, even though you've seen it every day and even to this day when I'm in Harbour Grace, you can't help but look at that eerie ghost ship. It's just a sight to behold.

As a matter of fact, it's actually famous because I remember one time attending a parliamentary seminar when I was actually Deputy Chair of Committees in the Speaker's office back some years ago. It was then Speaker Trimper who was Speaker and we held one of the conferences in Goose Bay, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. So, of course, we had parliamentarians and Speakers and Deputy Chairs and Deputy Speakers all who travelled. We had the conference in Goose Bay.

Part of the entertainment during that seminar weekend, the feature for the

entertainment was *The Smokeroom on the Kyle*. Here we were in Labrador and we were talking about *The Smokeroom on the Kyle*. It just goes to show it's appreciated and, obviously, the *Kyle* has a great, rich history that I would encourage anyone to look up as well – it's interesting – and how it was used to transfer supplies and people between here and Labrador.

Lots to see and do, of course, in the district. Again, Port de Grave, we have the Heritage Society and the renowned Christmas boat lighting and that event extends and gets bigger and bigger every year. It's not just provincially renowned, but it's across Canada but even internationally. One of the organizers, Joyce Morgan, who I give a big hats off to. I call her the unofficial mayor in Port de Grave. She puts so much into it, along with all the harvesters and what they go through. It's garnered international interest. It's a sight to see.

So lots to see and do. We're coming upon our summer season, so come on out. Hats off to all of our volunteers, as well, in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District. There were a lot of volunteers to contribute to the success of the Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival in Bay Roberts just last weekend and we will be celebrating the Klondyke Days. Spaniards Bay-Tilton have summer events. Upper Island Cove, Harbour Grace, as I mentioned, there's lots to see and do out there.

That said, too, now I will make my way and move on to some priorities for the roadwork. We certainly have been fortunate to secure a lot of resources and support for roadwork since becoming MHA but, that said, there's always more work to do. In particular, the southside of Harbour Grace is in need of some road repair and maintenance. Also, we're kicking off – we've secured significant funding from the federal government in conjunction with both provincial government and municipal government to install water, wastewater projects as Phase 1. I think we announced over \$5 million of that last year.

So that work, hopefully soon, will get under way in Harbour Grace. It's something that those residents have been lobbying for and wanting. As a matter of fact, it was actually a promise when southside became part of Harbour Grace – the municipality back in the day that that promise was made by the town council to have water and wastewater infrastructure on the southside.

We've got the Phase 1 approved and certainly committed to working with the town, municipality and all levels of government to get that work under way. We do know that we have a short construction season here in our province, so the sooner we can get at that, the better.

Also, Bishop's Cove is a lovely scenic location in my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: I ask Members to keep it down a little, please. I'm trying to hear the hon. Member.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

A guiderail replacement – that's something that took quite some time. It was a larger project that had to go to tender. It wasn't something that the local depot could handle for local employees there. It was a larger project and it took some time, you know, to advocate and to lobby and to work with the department but finally that funding has come through. It's gone to contract and now that guiderail is replaced in Bishop's Cove and anybody driving along Bishop's Cove, especially residents, would appreciate this because of the huge drop to the ocean.

Speaker, I don't know if you've ever had a drive through Bishop's Cove –

SPEAKER: This weekend.

P. PARSONS: All right, you spend a lot of time out in my district, Speaker. But take the tour. There are a lot of beautiful, scenic

things and that takes us Bishop's Cove, down into Upper Island Cove, where there's been a major fossil discovery that goes back years and years and years, so that's quite interesting.

It's a beautiful, scenic community, Upper Island Cove and it is situated, of course, between Bishop's Cove and Bryant's Cove. That said, I want to commend the volunteer firefighters across my district, the Bay Roberts Fire Rescue; Spainard's Bay-Tilton Fire Department; Upper Island Cove Fire Department, which looks after Bishop's Cove and Bryant's Cove; and the Harbour Grace Volunteer Fire Brigade. They work together all the time when need be. The Veterans Memorial stretches across my district. So when there's an incident there on the Veterans, all departments typically respond.

As I mentioned, we had some wildfires that have already occurred in my district this past season. Again, they're there to support one another. I do know that Upper Island Cove now has submitted an application for a new pumper firetruck – something that's needed. The volunteer firefighters have made me aware of this priority. Again, Chief Harvey Mercer, his dedication is second to none, as are all our volunteer firefighters. Their dedication is there and they've made me aware, of course, that this is a priority.

A few years back, we secured a rescue van, as well, for medical calls. Because they respond to a lot of health calls as well. That's something that we're seeing and they have the training. The medical rescue unit was the latest addition a few years ago to the Upper Island Cove Fire Department.

Again, Upper Island Cove is responsible for Bishop's Cove, the residents there, as well as Bryant's Cove. So the more that we can do to support them, that's what is needed to help these men and women do that job.

I know Harbour Grace, as well, is also in need of a vehicle. Bay Roberts has received

one, just last year we announced it, but again, the more we can do for these volunteers, these first responders, we should be. We need to be there and ensure that they are equipped with everything that they need to go out into those conditions on all our behalf.

I spoke earlier today about the search and rescue personnel, the Avalon North Wolverines Search and Rescue. They help with everything. They help with traffic control.

I want to congratulate the class of 2026 at Ascension Collegiate. They had their prom ceremony just a couple of weeks ago and it was a proud moment for them. But hats off to the Search and Rescue. They were there to help with the crowd control and the traffic control and that organization also help out at the Harbour Grace Regatta.

So these volunteer groups, they're there for the communities 24-7 in every season, every time in the year, through the positive, happy events and, of course, when an emergency occurs, they are there to step up.

Also, I would like to pick up where my colleague left off, how we got into talking about Muskrat Falls. I was also a journalist at that time when Muskrat Falls was being brought in, back at the time of that administration. I can remember, Speaker, Bill 29 was also introduced here on the floor of the House of Assembly. Bill 29 blocked access to information. I'm not sure if you were in the House then, Speaker – yes, I think you were. Some people were here.

I remember the reaction in the newsroom when Bill 29 was introduced and how it was a block to access to information. Then we know there was a big filibuster in the House at the time. The Liberals were in Opposition. I remember watching it and tuning in. There was a huge filibuster to stop this legislation from passing but, as we know, it did.

What we do know about that project is that we went it alone. We didn't have a partner, per se, to help build and develop that resource. One would question why, because we do know previous to that every premier, as was mentioned here earlier, had tried to crack and renegotiate and fix the 1969 deal that was made, of course, in Joey's time, as my colleague just referenced. Again, we have to ask, were the experts brought in to do the negotiation at that time? I mean, was the knowledge there? Was the education there? Clearly, we didn't end up getting on the best side of that long term.

Premiers of every stripe had taken this deal to court to have it opened. We know it wasn't successful at the time. It was ruled that Quebec did not have to reopen that deal, renegotiate that deal. But we do know that we are in another interesting time in our history where Quebec is in a big need for the electricity and for that power.

We do know, based on what we did hear from the international experts that were brought in just last year -and, I mean, that's an unprecedented event that we saw here unfold here in the House of Assembly, when the experts were seated down here in this part of the Chamber. Again, international experts, no one with any political ties or family ties or whatnot to what's happening here with regard to Newfoundland and Labrador politics.

But those internationals, the best of the best were brought in here to negotiate on our behalf and, again, to have an open and transparent process. It was in January. I remember it was Old Christmas Day when we reopened the House. It was something that the Opposition parties of the day were calling for and it was something that was granted by the previous administration, our Liberal administration, by then Premier Furey.

We do know that these international experts were here. I mean, they certainly didn't have

to agree and be subject to politicians, elected officials here on the floor of the House of Assembly and also go before the media. They took questions from the media. There were no restrictions. It was information. It was very transparent. There were no secrets. There were no corners. There was nothing hidden at that time. I mean, it was a free-for-all, anybody could ask questions. There were no restrictions.

Again, it was something that I heard on the campaign trail. I'm sure each and every Member here who went and knocked on doors there was conversation about the MOU. I would say in every district because everybody has been paying attention and watching what has been happening with our history. Now, of course, we are rich in resources, if they're managed properly. There was concern about it, but what was clear is that the Premier now of the day made promises that there would be a referendum, that nothing would go forward until it was brought to the people, to the everyday common person here in our province, to have their say. That was a promise that was made and, again, we don't know, we haven't got any answers when that question has been put to the Premier.

This is not just a little event that's coming. This is a huge event in our history that could change lives – life changing for the people of our province.

A constituent brought it to my attention, said to me how they'd like to see it better explained about how that money, the money that was said by the international experts that we stand to gain, the billions of dollars, could help life for people here in Newfoundland and Labrador now and how it would help with cost-of-living measures. Because do you know what? There are people out there of different income brackets, but there are people who are struggling. It's realistic struggles from making decisions, whether it's medication they're going to buy, what kind of foods that

they're going to buy and how much food they're going to buy.

Again, we talk about power bills and electricity bills and I'd say it's time for Newfoundland Power to introduce smart meter infrastructure so people, consumers can have an input and better monitor their own usage to give them control, like we see in other jurisdictions. That's something that should be done because we know power bills are very high. I've even heard and seen constituents say in my district that their power bill is comparable to another mortgage payment that they're seeing on a monthly basis. It's just up and it's down, it's up and it's down.

We do know that without the rate mitigation protection from Ottawa they'd even be more, that it would even be double all because of the way a framework of a deal, how it was structured. It's great to have a resource that's renewable. It's great to own the resource. We're not really getting the benefits of that right now for this generation. As my colleague said, his grandkids may avail of that. It's still very, very costly and it's still something that we need and we rely on Ottawa.

So we hope that there's a plan in place because, let me tell you, we heard people taking to social media, calling our constituency office, talking to the news media. Imagine if those power bills have jumped from \$700 to \$900 next year or when the rate mitigation is due to expire. It's something that's very real. It's not something that the other side likes to hear but it's something that we have to deal with, these are facts. It's not an opinion piece.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. PARSONS: I hear chuckling over there now, too, that's fine. They can think it's funny but I tell you one thing, the people of the province do not think it's funny, especially those who are threatened to have their power cut off. Imagine the stress that

puts on seniors or the person, whether it's a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing recipient or whomever hears that threat: we're going to cut your power because you can't pay your bill, because you can't make ends meet, because of cost-of-living measures.

I say there's much more that can be done. We debate income tax bills here earlier today, there's more that can be done. We do know there's more revenue coming into the coffers with regard to the oil, what's happening in the Middle East. As bad as that situation is and as dangerous as that situation is, ironically, it's enriching the coffers here. So there is room to do something to help people now, not to wait, not to biff it down the road, not to give an excuse, that it's permanent legislation because we can always come in here at the will of the House, to come here and debate legislation and to change legislation. So there are measures that can be taken right now to help the people.

I will remind this hon. House and yourself, Mr. Speaker, that the promises that were made on this campaign, the recent campaign trail in the fall, lower taxes, safer communities, we're not seeing that. It was all lip service up until this point because we're not actually seeing those tangible actions. We're not seeing them.

We could go further with the gasoline tax reduction. We could come in here, we could remove provincial sales tax, temporarily, if need be, from power bills. We do know the situation that we're in. We have the ingredients to be a rich jurisdiction with regard to our fishery. We have an amazing – I always say we have the best product in the world, the best seafood product in the world that Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer to the world. Our natural resources, our renewable resources, of course, what we're seeing in the Churchill River.

So do you know what? This shouldn't be political. This shouldn't be up to one person

or one group to decide who gets to see what negotiators and what experts are giving. That shouldn't be made by the call of one person because I would be fearful, you're going to make that call, you're going to shut the public out, back like when Bill 29 happened, when Muskrat Falls was sanctioned. You're going to go down in history and you're going to be remembered for that. So the decisions that are made here in this House, you're going to be remembered for that.

I would encourage the leader of the day, the Premier of the day, be open, be transparent. You promised this. You were very bold and loud to say that when you were making your promises to voters. So I'd say honour those promises now. Let us in. Let the people in, as well as the people here in this hon. House but let the Newfoundland and Labrador public know who is advising, what are their credentials as the leader has raised.

We know that the credentials of the international experts who are put on record and their titles were here back in the day. Why the big secret? This is everybody's Newfoundland and Labrador. This is everybody's resource. It doesn't belong to one group of people. It doesn't belong to one individual. It doesn't belong to one Premier. I say it's for the people. Those are the promises that were made and that's what we'd like to see.

Now, as an Official Opposition, it's a different role but it's the role that the people of the province have assigned our administration and that's what we're going to do. We're going to ask the questions. It's about facts. It's about facts. There's no place for rude behaviour or immature behaviour or chuckling and laughing or trying to intimidate a Member into not speaking or not asking the questions because that's not going to happen – that's not going to happen.

I will take my seat now, Speaker, and I look forward to speaking again.

Thank you.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, second time today, what a privilege and an honour to speak in this House of Assembly on behalf of the people of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

I think for all that are listening, not to worry, the Habs will rebound tomorrow night.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Because we've got a new hook. Right? Absolutely. Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, to start off –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

E. LOVELESS: Did I get a heckling from Leafs fans over there?

SPEAKER: More unparliamentary language.

E. LOVELESS: Maybe, I'm not sure.

Mr. Speaker, tourism, I believe, is not talked about enough in terms of the value of it in this province. I would encourage the Finance Minister to take notes and to create a five-to-10-year tourism plan. Cost it out, budget it out and come forward with a good tourism plan because I don't think we recognize how important tourism is to the province because for my district alone, I did reference Simani, and I think the Speaker was going to go see Bud Davidge that night when I spoke on it.

But the Simani group – Sim Savory is no longer with us, but Bud Davidge certainly is. I told Shanneyganock I think their stock has

gone up because of Bud Davidge. He's in his 80s and enjoying what he does best, and that's certainly singing, performing.

Bud Davidge was always the writer. He wrote the songs. Sim was the champion of the music part. But Simani will always be remembered certainly as a popular group, an identity for Newfoundland and Labrador, for sure.

AN HON. MEMBER: A great ambassador.

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, a great ambassador.

Also, people from my district have had some book launches. Alex Hickey has certainly written the *Evening Star*, great books, and another one titled *Misfortune Bay*. If you ever get an opportunity to see those books, buy them. Support the locals and their good stories around rural Newfoundland from Alex Hickey, who's a talented man and certainly has invested a lot of time.

I believe there's a book launch tonight that I'm not getting to and I couldn't get to the other night because the House was sitting. There's a book written by Hayward and Raymond Blake. It's called *Outport Woman: Life on the Ocean's Edge*. So I'm looking forward to certainly getting that book and having a read of it.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of accommodations as well, which is important for tourism in the province, we don't have enough of them. We know that. But in my district, in terms of attracting people to certain areas of the province, trails, we have them in Harbour Breton and in the Bay d'Espoir area.

So there's a lot of potential in the tourism to attract people to these rural communities. I think that's certainly our identity. Not to take away from the urban centres, but I believe the rural parts of the province is our true identity in Newfoundland and Labrador. If you're ever visiting Rencontre East, when you get off the ferry to get on the wharf –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: – there's a big sign that says: Isolated and loving it. You knock on doors, you talk to people, you know why they love it there.

Talking about identity, there's even a song that was written by Johnny Drake, "Headin' Home." In that song it referenced the Iron Skull in Belleoram, which is an identity in the Town of Belleoram but certainly known to people down on the coast.

Mr. Speaker, to move to a few other issues, I guess, or concerns, my colleague from Burin - Grand Bank talked about students, and I know there's been some disappointment in organizations in our district this year that, for the first time, not getting a student to help and rely on the students, which is good experience for them and contributes to the community and they're not getting them this year. That's a big disappointment for some in the community.

He also talked about volunteers. I think we all agree how valuable volunteers are. He referenced the Lions Clubs in our districts and I have many in mine. The Lions Clubs in my district also have centres that their Lions Club becomes emergency centres for the communities and it's a part of the planning, Mr. Speaker.

There are lots of volunteers in communities, whether that's coaches for sports, we have church groups and we have mayors and councils and we have 50-plus clubs, which are very, very important. Under that umbrella is the NL 50+ Federation. It's a membership-based, charitable organization devoted to the welfare and best interests of the older people in this province – the seniors.

It is a province-wide umbrella organization which represents 130 50-plus clubs across

Newfoundland and Labrador. It's been a success. I attended one of the AGMs years ago and was certainly impressed by the membership and the interest in those 50-plus groups and the AGM. The objectives of the 50+ Federation is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm finding it very difficult to hear the hon. Member.

E. LOVELESS: Yes, me too, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the protection.

The 50+ Federation helps promote, establish and foster seniors' groups in their communities. They also provide education for these people in the retired and seniors' groups, which is good for them in their communities. They have a reach out to seniors who are lonely, isolated or at risk.

That's a reality. It's not to be taken lightly in terms of what's going on in our communities. These groups are there to support these seniors. They also provide programs which promote healthy and active lifestyles for seniors, mental and physical health, which is another, I guess, level of support for them. Also the 50-plus club, the organization, the group provides opportunities for seniors to utilize their volunteer and leadership skills for the benefit of all persons. That's key and that's important.

I know currently the Federation president is Linda Olford, and I'd like to thank her for her leadership and what she does for those 50-plus clubs and continues to do for them, because it's beyond important and we don't talk about it enough in terms of what they do for their community.

Mr. Speaker, I talk about the fishery and in terms of aquaculture a lot. The fishery in my district is not a crab fishery. There's more lobster. I guess the lobster is the crab in my

district, and certainly halibut as well. All indication is that they're having a decent season, so hopefully that continues.

But in terms of the aquaculture industry, I've talked a fair bit about the aquaculture industry, but I just want to try to get everyone to appreciate what aquaculture does because I don't think everybody appreciates what the aquaculture industry does for the province and continues to do for it.

In September, I think the last two years has been the Cold Harvest event that they have, and this year, I believe, is the Canadian one. So this province is representing many on the stage from a Canadian perspective this fall. There are a lot of people that certainly invest a lot of time into the industry, and I certainly am proud, in my district, of Fabian Manning Jr. This year, he received the Aquaculturist of the Year Award and recognized for exceptional commitment to operational excellence, community engagement and advancing aquaculture in the province. I'm telling you, he's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Absolutely.

He's an example of an innovator. He's got a boy that's eight or nine years old that's ready to take his vessels and his backhoes and is ready to go to work now. I believe that was his upbringing as a child. But we need more of them for sure, and I'd like to say thank you for all that Fabian does for the area because he believes in the youth, he believes in bringing young people home and treats his employees with a lot of respect.

I have a magazine here that is *The Cold Harvester* and it talks about the cold harvester of Newfoundland and Labrador aquaculture. There are some good stories in here, Mr. Speaker, that if anyone certainly

sees the magazine, pick it up and have a read.

Sheldon George runs the fish plant into St. Alban's and he's been the NAIA president; he's still there involved in that piece. He ran Cooke Aquaculture for a long time and now he's running the plant in Bay d'Espoir for a different company, and I'm glad. I remember when I met with them, they had intent to open up the plant. When they said they were going to hire him, then I had no concerns about their intent or what they would do for the area.

This is Sheldon George in this article. He says, "Why fight to keep our industry going and expand it? If you do not know the answer just stop by the processing plant in St. Alban's." So the minister can stop by there, hopefully, when he visits the area. "In 2025 this plant, which processed some of the first sustainably grown sea farmed products in Newfoundland as the industry started, reopened after a 7-year break. The plant has a young workforce; it is great to see many people in the 20's involved in the industry. Local businesses notice a difference in activity and sales, and they comment on how great it is to see money being spent in the community."

That's a testimony from Sheldon George. Again, another entrepreneur that's keeping people in the area in rural parts of the province, which we all know is a challenge.

I've always said about the side industries of aquaculture. In this magazine, it talks about TrueFoam, which is out of Bishop Falls. They make Styrofoam and they contribute a lot to the industry.

In this magazine it shows other businesses as well, the environmental sciences, the operational oceanography for aquaculture and also there's an article here from Ted Weaire. He's involved with SIMCorp, which is Sweeney International Marine Corp., and they specialize in marine services, "including the study, preservation, and

sustainability of marine environments. The company is committed to championing sustainable innovation and economic development to support strong working oceanic projects."

They employ local people as well. I guess their role is protecting the ocean, because I've heard many companies say on the Southwest Coast – what we consider bays west – that they are the best growing conditions in the world because of the temperatures of the water and the natural flushing which requires them to do less man work in terms of cleaning their nets and getting better quality of fish.

Also in this magazine it says, The Long Wait, A Second Shot at Oysters in Charles Arm, NL. The oysters – and I'm sure anybody in the aquaculture industry know, Terry Mills, the name and certainly a big player as well in the industry that has worked hard to, again, employ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, keeping them in their communities so they can stay home, raise families, pay taxes and contribute to the overall being of this great province.

That is *The Cold Harvester*, if anyone ever comes across that magazine have a read of it because they do several versions throughout the year talking about the good industry of aquaculture.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the federal minister made a ruling on the food fishery only a couple of weeks ago. I think she missed the mark. I don't think she listened to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We know that because they were asking for fairness. I get it in terms of areas that have critical zones, we understand that, but I think I've heard many say that there were options that she could have explored in terms of the areas that are considered critical, that they could have presented, yet keeping the fairness of seven days a week. That's what everybody was asking for. In

terms of the seven days, it comes down to the individual, when they hit the water.

I said before that I do have some concerns that they've lifted the requirement of how many are in a boat. I hope that we don't hear stories that it becomes a safety issue, Mr. Speaker.

I know it's been talked about for years and years and years in terms of the food fishery, if we had joint management we could be with the federal government making these decisions or, as I pleaded with the minister many of times, give us a year or two years of making decisions on the fishery in the province, see if we do it differently. If it's the wrong decisions, then it's on us as a provincial government and we take the full responsibility in terms of making that wrong decision. But I believe we would, I believe if it was provincial – not saying that the federal government don't listen to the smartest scientists of all and that's the ones that are on the water, been on the water for 30-, 40-plus years and they are the fisherpersons, because it's not just the fishermen, there are lots of women that are on the water that have contributed to family businesses and their success as well, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the provincial budget, in terms of the fishery, there are not a lot of investments in the budget. There were marketing investments, for sure, and I think I might have asked it in Estimates in terms of the marketing investment, if it was geared towards crab – crab alone, but I think it may be species related. If not, it should be.

The Atlantic Fisheries Fund, I say to the Minister of Finance who's listening to me that budget some dollars for the Atlantic Fisheries Fund because it's crucial and I think the feds will agree and probably come out with another program because it's not a cost. It's an investment. It's an investment in quality. It's an investment for improvements in how people fish and all of that leads to a better quality of fish that they catch.

I see my time is winding down. I do have other things to say. Hopefully, I'll get an opportunity to say more when I can talk about, in the document that the Finance Minister presented, that shows us numbers, factual information, whether it's population, economic outlook – all positive trends. Those positive trends didn't happen in the last seven months.

There are a lot of things that have happened whether it's the oil industry, fishery, mining – we don't talk about mining enough. There are a lot of things that have happened in the last 10 years – good things – and, hopefully, they will continue because if they continue then it benefits all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, you've already spoken –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I'm controlling this.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, are you standing on a point of order or something?

E. JOYCE: No, I'm going to speak to (inaudible).

SPEAKER: You already spoke to the subamendment. You will get an opportunity, I believe, to speak in the amendments. You already spoke on the sub.

Are there any other speakers now on this side over here? No.

We're going to call the question. This is on the subamendment.

All those in favour of the subamendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against the subamendment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The subamendment has been defeated.

On motion, subamendment defeated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We are now on the amendment.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, they try everything to keep me quiet, even to go by the rules. I apologize for that. I thought we were on the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak today on the Auditor General's report and the reason why on the housing and the airport inn. It bothers me to the point that I was trying so hard for housing in Corner Brook and for people at the hotel, the former Corner Brook hotel, and I was getting shut down.

I know the Member for Grand Bank, we had a good relationship; we were working on things. We had an open relationship that I can meet with you, discuss things, and we were planning to get things done. But then it changed after you got moved.

When I look at this report, and I look at some of the things that's in the report, and I look at how it initiated even before it was even done, according to the Auditor General, that there were discussions between the minister and the owner of the facility that began in March. So this started even before any involvement on Newfoundland and Labrador Housing into this unit.

The striking thing with me about this is that we were led to believe that there was so many people in this unit and there wasn't. There were so many rooms unfilled; \$1.5 million per year weren't even used, but we we're paying for it, vacant rooms. The day before Housing and Cabinet recommended this, there was a proposal presented from the proponents who owned the facility. That day the proposal from Housing said we want to accept that.

All the work I've been trying to do out in Corner Brook and getting nowhere. All the times I tried to have meetings and got nowhere. I look at the abuse of this here. I actually feel so sorry for the people that I was trying to help out in Corner Brook and the Bay of Islands. It's actually almost appalling for me to stand up and go through parts of this here – no open bid, no procurement, nothing. Absolutely nothing on this here.

I'll just read a few things from the Auditor General – that's incurred unaccepted costs; did not adequately plan, procure, manage or oversee for the 34 occupants up to late December – 34 found places.

I can go back in *Hansard*, I'm sure I can find it. I remember the minister at the time standing up and saying, oh, it's a crisis. It was a crisis, that's why we had to get it. Unless I'm wrong – and if I am someone can stand and tell me. I read it and the reason why that place was selected because it's close to a bus stop. That's what the Auditor General has there.

I remember the minister standing on his feet over there, saying it was a crisis. We had so many people homeless. They were out in encampments, that we had to find something quick. That was the reason put in there, because it's close to a bus stop.

I don't know how to explain it, the feeling that I have working so hard, standing in this House asking questions, trying to get stuff done, trying to convince that there was a

unit up there that should be demolished and something built. Almost laughed at and then, on the other case, making an announcement, no, we're cancelling the announcement, not going to do it now. I even offered a minister of that Crown, offered to take him out in the Corner Brook area, Curling-Bay of Islands area and I would bring him to the 65 units that needs repairs. I would bring him to each one. I got laughed at – never done.

When the minister took over, how many units needed repairs in Corner Brook, in the Bay of Islands? Seventy-two. I offered for years to do that and it never worked. Almost like push it aside. It's only the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands again complaining about stuff.

The thing that I think about most, when I look at this here, I look at the land for the hospital, then I look at the other piece of land, Snow's Lane or something, whatever it's called, but that was given back to the family – which I don't think was totally his fault, but it was done under his watch. When I think about that and I think about the bigger picture for the province, that Member was part of the government that changed when we set up an Oversight Committee, they changed the terms of reference. So there's a pattern here.

This is the same Member, the same part of the government who's questioning this government on what should be done. Like, I'm missing something here. I'm really missing something. The two things that bother me is that myself and the Leader of the Third Party, we worked so hard to get an Oversight Committee and it's almost like, we've got it done and they voted for it. Now let's change it because they're getting too close. They're asking too many questions. It's almost like being used.

Then the housing part of it is almost, again, okay, just keep him quiet. He's going to ask questions. He's going to try to get stuff done. Let's just keep him quiet but nothing

done for the people. Now the same person, the same Member is questioning government on what they should do. When you look at this here and you're talking about even the Auditor General mentioned the public perception of what it costs. It wasn't even close to what it cost for that hotel.

I say to the government, when you're getting questions like that and you look at this part – part of the changes of the MOU – look where the questions are coming from. This is not just one person. This is the government itself. Because I can tell you, it bothers me when I couldn't get any housing in Corner Brook. It bothers me.

Talking to the staff and you see the number on the wait-list and you want to help and you couldn't get it done. I'll just remind the people in this House, no matter what party you're with, we're all here to help people – we're all here to help people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that I've tried on numerous occasions with the previous government to help in different area. Sometimes it worked – not a lot – very few, actually. So then, of course, then the election came up. When the election came up I, of course, independent and people said, well, are going back here? Are you going with this party? Not a chance. I'm staying as an independent.

Let me tell you something, and I'm going to put this out and I'm going to put it on the record. It's some refreshing to be able to talk to the ministers on issues in your district. It's some refreshing the Premier says, you have my number if anything major comes up.

Do you know the first thing that we do with the Minister of Health? To get the PET scanner in Corner Brook. That was taken out, the original design. Get the PET

scanner. They made a commitment that they're going to get the information. They're going to be honest with the people on the West Coast and then they're going to work on it to get it done.

Do you know something? They did it. The minister made an announcement that the PET scanner will be coming in 2027. Explained, outlined why we couldn't get it done earlier because it has to be certified. I understand all that. But all along, you look at the announcement well before, oh, we're going to have it in 2024. I knew it couldn't happen. The end of 2025, oh, we couldn't. I knew it couldn't happen. But it's refreshing.

I'll tell you the other thing that I worked on, and I was adamant, was putting long-term care patients in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital where they get the proper care, and it would clear up acute-care beds. I called the Premier before the election and I told him. Do you know what he said to me? We'll do it. The previous government put in 45 beds; 20 were long-term care. What they should have done, what I've been asking for – I'll explain later – why it wasn't done? Because it needed a lot of renovations and there wasn't a quick announcement. That's what it was.

So when I spoke to the Premier, he said we'll get it done. He put me on to the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health, when I asked questions in this House, said it couldn't be done up to a year. Of course, someone like me goes, what are you talking about, up to a year? She explained to me. Within a week, I had a briefing with the senior officials.

They sat down and gave me their briefing note, and they sat down and explained why it couldn't be done. One of it was the roof was leaking, the windows were leaking; they couldn't have the capacity for the food because the food service delivery for the new hospital and the long-term care was at its max. But do you know what they said? We're starting right away, the engineering to

get it done. It's going to take time, but when it's done, the 45 new beds will alleviate a lot of the pressure on the emergency room and acute-care beds.

But the problem I found from the previous government to this government, they're telling you the truth. I have no problem going out and telling the people the truth. I have absolutely no problem whatsoever doing that, but when you're not working on that and you're not doing the work on it.

So after I was speaking to the Minister of Health and she explained what was happening, who did I had to speak to next? The Minister of TI because they're doing the work. The Minister of TI is doing the work. Let me tell you, speaking to the engineers and that from the department, they went through it and said here's our plan.

I spoke to the Minister of TI on it and he said, yeah, they got to go through that process to get the engineering done. I can show you. They spelled it out what the issues were, the roof, the leaking, the system, the food service, the cafeteria, the kitchen area has got to be all redone because there are no food services there and other things. So the Minister of TI said, yes, we're working on it. They are working on it. It's going to take a year or longer but it's being worked on, and it's refreshing. It is actually refreshing.

These are the biggest concerns out in Corner Brook right now, the whole Corner Brook-Bay of Islands area; it's health care and then it's housing. That's the biggest concerns, and I've been fighting. I'm sure the people that were here before the election – how many times did I stand up and give speeches on the health care and the housing, and nothing done – nothing done. Almost laughed at. Told off. He's just going to criticize us anyway, and that was normal.

Then when I look at this today, and the Auditor General – which I knew there was

always something wrong. I knew that but I didn't know it was so bad. When I look at that today, I go through this here and think about the people who suffered, who couldn't get housing because no one wanted to step up for Corner Brook, it's sad. It was sad.

I just think of the other thing, Mr. Speaker, and I speak on behalf of the people of Bay of Islands who are bringing concerns to me: roadwork. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, who I know personally, I've said it before and I'll say it again, there's no way in the world that he can give everything that I'm going to ask for, because no one would get anything else.

I would keep pushing the envelope. That's just me. That's just the way I am for the people of the district, but I can guarantee you, this year, after working with the minister – he was honest with me, and I don't mind if you can't get something, at least be honest. Explain why so I can go back to the people. He said right from day one that we have to put out the big tenders, and if the price comes in low, there's money left over.

I waited. I actually waited. I said: Okay, that's fair. As soon as I knew the tender was out, I was talking to him over right there. I said: Okay, let's start talking. He said: B'y, I don't know. Then he said: Go for a ride with the boys out there from Deer Lake, go through the roads and find out the most important areas for safety. Sure enough, there's going to be roadwork done in the Bay of Islands this year. On Route 50, there's going to be work done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I know there are some people, one or two councils – and I'll deal with that myself – out saying, well, there's no roadwork done because it's not out in the road plan. I'm trying to explain to them, the road plan may not mean you're not getting a kilometre here. The road plan is mainly for

the Trans-Canada and the bigger issues, the bridges and other stuff.

The minister was honest with me and said, no, there's no money right now. You have to come back after and I said, no problem and we did. We worked some things for the worst part of Route 450. It's refreshing to be able to sit down and have that discussion, have that honest and frank discussion. Because who is it going to benefit? It's not going to bother me in an election because I'm already elected now, but it's going to help the people in Humber - Bay of Islands and that's what we're supposed to be here for.

I look at the Member who is responsible for Crown Lands. My God, it's some nice to sit down – and that's a big issue too, I'll say to the minister. I said it while you were over here and I'll say it while you're over there, that's a big issue for a lot of people, land where people's houses that were on land and don't even know if they own the land until they try – like one we were dealing with who applied for a plot of land to put some flowers into, finds out your house is not even there. It's a big thing.

I tell you what's refreshing is to be able to sit down with the minister in his office with his staff and discuss it. That's refreshing, I have to tell you. It is refreshing.

Of course, when I'm over and I'll say to the people, that when I'm over there –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: When I'm over there and they see me over in that corner, which we usually do and he looks down and says, oh, not him again, but they will come down. Each one of them will come down and explain it. You may not get what you want.

I use the *Baltic III*, for example – I always thought they were going to barge it out but

they're not. They're going to tear up some of the land in Cedar Cove, supposedly put it back to its natural state, which I don't know, but they wanted to get it done quick. I went to the Minister of TI, I said, b'y, they're doing it. I'm not totally in agreement but they're the experts, not me, so I have to work with them.

I went to the minister and said, how about the permits? Two days later, they were all done; the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, same thing. He said: No, b'y, everything is all done.

This is the kind of work that's refreshing for me, personally. I'm not going to get all the issues that I want done – not going to get it, but I guarantee you one thing, it's great to deal with people who can sit down with and have a conversation.

The Minister of Service NL, another one, I can pick up the phone and phone him and say listen, what's the issue on this here and he will give me a direct answer. I had a meeting with the Minister of Immigration – I wanted a meeting. Do you know what he said? When are you coming in? Like, it's so refreshing. We sat down – I didn't get what I requested but at least I got a reason why it couldn't be done, and that's a part of it.

Then when you're fighting for your constituents back in Humber - Bay of Islands and I've got to go back and say, I don't know because I can't get any answers.

I come back again to housing and health care – housing and health care. That's two important things. When I couldn't get straight answers, when the answers that I was getting at the time for the people of Humber - Bay of Islands and Corner Brook, when I couldn't get the answers, Mr. Speaker, I had to go back and say, I don't know because I couldn't get an answer and nine chances out of 10, when I did get one, it wasn't correct.

That PET scanner is a crow in me when it was taken out. People now have to come to St. John's, get their scan, do the procedure in here for 30 minutes, drive back to Corner Brook or fly back to Corner Brook or the West Coast – and it was taken out.

I made a commitment that I'll stay here as long as I can, as long as the people elect me in Humber - Bay of Islands, until that PET scanner is done. I made that commitment, the new hospital, the radiation and the PET scanner, and I'm going to try to stick to my commitment to not leave this House of Assembly until that's done. Now, the people may decide differently, that's their choice out in Humber - Bay of Islands.

Just something that's refreshing, the Minister of Crown Lands who is responsible for Fire and Emergency Services – I'm going to bring this up because we brought up today about volunteer firefighters – I said, listen, we've got to go over the applications for Humber - Bay of Islands. Do you know what he said to me? Go away, b'y. I said, we've got to discuss it. He said, let's do it next week.

So he thought I wanted it done now but he said we'll do it next week – just what's the priority? That's refreshing. It's actually refreshing. Do I think that I'm going to haul out 10 or 12 applications and say, here. It's not going to happen. But it's refreshing to sit down and discuss their priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in the House of Assembly. I'm going to speak to the 2026 budget, not the 2025 budget.

I just want to start with two things from today. A large number of us were at the JAG Hotel today for the breakfast with the Registered Nurses' Union. It was very informative and it's great to see so many MHAs there, you know, the Premier, the leader of our party, the Third Party, Speaker, you and lots of other Members. We do get along here sometimes. I even passed the Leader of the Third Party some salt and pepper today.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible)

J. KORAB: I'm not going to tell you what was in the salt and pepper but I did pass him the salt and pepper shakers, but one thing that the Nurses' Union had to say around the budget when it came out, the president, Yvette Coffey, she said she had some major concerns around the lack of investment in retaining nurses. There was \$8 million allotted in the budget to train and recruit more nurses but the budget line didn't specifically mention retention. They said, seeing that word wasn't in there, that was a major letdown. That was what she said on budget day, but down there, today, this morning, they said a lot of important things. They talked about the patient-to-nurse ratio, but one of the biggest things they did talk about was retention. That was the number one thing I took from it. I mean, there's safety and whatnot but retention. They said, you keep recruiting but if you're recruiting going into the same system, they'll get burnt out and possibly leave.

So to me, Speaker, for the Budget Speech to leave out that word, even though it was only one word, that was a long speech. That was about a seven-glass-of-water speech and we left out that important word.

I also want to mention something else from today regarding nurses and whatnot. I mentioned St. Clare's a number of times. Unfortunately, I spent a couple of hours there with my 89-year-old grandmother today. She's going to be okay by the looks of it, but, specifically, we were in the hallway

of the emerg. When I showed up and was told you can go on down the hallway and stop when you find her, it was very tough walking past 12 to 15 seniors lying on hospital beds, laying in the hallway.

Now I know this isn't a problem that this government here created. This is something that has happened for some time, but it really struck me, while my grandmother was on the bed, the gentleman next to me looked at me – I don't know if he recognized me or not, I do have a House of Assembly pin on but, literally, his exact words to me were, we need a new hospital. I told him I couldn't agree more.

So my grandmother was situated, like I said, in a hallway. She was actually situated right where the ambulance brings in patients on stretchers. At one point, the paramedics came in and they asked somebody working there, where do I put this patient? Their exact words were, I have no idea. We're pretty full, find somewhere to put him.

So that's where we're bringing people in emergency to. That was about six hours ago. It's very frustrating. It's very disappointing. It's a tall task for the minister to fix but, anyway, that was just that today.

I say that to preface the Facility Condition Index. I've talked about this before. This is what the government uses to help determine what's more cost effective to either replace or maintain a facility. As we all know now, St. Clare's scored 53 per cent. It's the worst score of any hospital in our province. Anything above 30 per cent should be considered to be replaced. So we're at 53.

I ask the government, do your costing, do whatever you need – to the TI Minister, do your costing about fixing up this hospital, if you wish, but when a report comes back and it says you're throwing good money after bad, please get together as a Cabinet, listen to the experts, do the right thing and put a plan together. You don't have to put it

up on Kenmount Crossing. I don't care where you put it. Put it somewhere on the Northeast Avalon, but please do the right thing and get a new hospital for the residents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: Staff deserve better, and I can tell you, from what I've seen today, the residents deserve better.

This budget was put forward as helping people with affordability. We kept hearing that in the House since it has been open for the last few months. We've talked about all the levers that can be pulled. As we know now, some levers were pulled and some weren't pulled at all. When it comes to housing, to me, this budget doesn't move the needle enough.

Hope Jamieson, they are the president of Annex Consulting. It's a social purpose consulting firm specializing in affordable housing. They said in an article there about two weeks ago, just after the budget came out, "The Wakeham government allocated \$31.1 million over three years to construct new public housing units, 'in high-priority areas based on current and forecasted demand.'"

There it also said, "With current construction costs above \$350,000 per door, \$31.1 million amounts to fewer than 90 units. If accounting for the net decrease pointed out in that same AG report, it means that NL Housing's portfolio will expand by about 30 units if we benchmark per-door costs optimistically. That amounts to about a 0.6 per cent increase in the total number of public housing units, and would address 1.2 per cent of the 2025 waitlist demand, which sat at 2,603"

The article also said, "Build Canada Homes recently replaced the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's [National Housing Strategy](#) programs as the new vehicle for delivering funding for affordable housing

and construction. The new corporation stresses the need for 'shovel-ready projects,' which means land much be secured, designs and municipal approvals must be in place," and here's a host of other criteria that is needed to get this money from the feds.

The biggest trouble right now we have is Newfoundland and Labrador does not have a funding program in place to help developers organize and put forward viable applications. That's a major gap right now.

The investment from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is, no question, going to help the application they have in Western Labrador, but that's a shovel-ready one. That's great that funding is there for that. That's fantastic but that doesn't help other applicants who are looking to avail of the new federal housing.

Speaker, I was on city council for seven years and I was a realtor for 12 years, so I feel I have a pretty decent understanding of how zoning, builds and development in general takes place. I was the Housing minister for just over a month, not a long time but enough time to get an understanding of the challenges we are facing here. I can honestly say there are a lot of challenges.

But I will say, I have to credit staff. I only worked with them for about a month, but we've got some fantastic staff right from top management right down to our maintenance people and everyone in between. They work really hard.

Speaker, many people across this beautiful province are struggling to put a roof over their head. I mean, that's evident. If you watch the news at all, you see that young families can't afford their first home. That means they stay in the rental market longer. What happens when they're in the rental market longer? There are less units available. It's simple supply and demand.

It's harder to find an apartment and the monthly rents, in most places in this province, have gone up, Speaker. In the St. John's Metro area, rent has gone way up to the point where some people just can't afford to pay rent and the ones that do, once they pay their rent, their heat, their light, they have a few dollars left to live on. So until we get more housing units, this will continue and, unfortunately, this is probably going to get worse.

So it's not just on the provincial government to help this, all three levels of government have a role to play here. The district I represent, the City of St. John's, changed their development regulations just about two years ago, to allow more density and a host of other things that I won't get into.

Back when I was Housing minister, for that month, I had FPT call with the federal minister, hon. Gregor Robertson and the big ask was allowing the province to have more flexibility in how we access the Build Canada Homes program. I hope that's something that the current minister is advocating for.

The other thing, just to reiterate, it said in that article above, the issue is Newfoundland and Labrador don't have that funding program to take place, to help facilitate these applications that are shovel ready. It wasn't in this budget but I'd like to see the government, if they move forward, to get some kind of program that will help, like I said, these applicants.

With regard to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing stock, we have thousands on a wait-list. As I said, 2,603 on that wait-list. Contrary to what the TI Minister said during QP, it's not all negative over here. I do feel my glass is literally half full right now. There was \$12.7 million over two years for the Housing Corporation to hire more than 20 new maintenance and repair staff. That's a good thing.

I talked with some maintenance workers in Kilbride during the election and one thing they said to me is they're run off their feet, so I am glad to see that. But while the investment is welcome, we need to do more. The government's approach in this budget has been so bleak that it leaves Newfoundlanders and Labradorians guessing where their priorities truly lie, especially when it comes to fixing the housing crisis and improving availability.

I want to get back to multi-year capital works. This is one I've talked about a lot and it's one, I guess, with my municipal background, I'm still hearing a lot from municipalities. MNL didn't have much good to say about the changes to the multi-year capital works. I talked to members from Mount Pearl City Council, talked to the mayor of the City of St. John's, I talked to the mayor of Torbay – he was very colourful in his words about this – and there were many others who were not happy when this budget came out and they're still not happy.

The minister says they're rightsizing the budget, but I said this yesterday, let's call it what it is; rightsizing a budget is a cut. It simply is.

One of the things that the TI Minister talked about was that the money on the books being carried over for these multi-year capital works. So that might be the case for a few municipalities and a few projects, but don't destroy the good trying to fix the bad. If there is a way you can make changes and adjustments to that without throwing out the baby with the bathwater. If you're listening now, I'm happy to see that.

They feel the changes and the challenges here in the seven that are currently now in the multi-year capital works. So 15 are no longer included in the multi-year capital works. They're all receiving less money. So as the minister said multiple times, we should do our homework. I went out and I did my homework. I've confirmed the seven – and actually, I'll tell you who I consulted

on this. I consulted my seven-year-old daughter. I asked her, is four more than three? She confirmed it is.

The previous multi-year capital works was over three years. Now it's over four. Again, four is more than three. So while the numbers may look higher for the City of St. John's, it's not. When you average it over four years versus the three, it's \$500,000 less per year. Write that down. I'm hearing now it's over five years, so look out, cook out.

So if you want to look at Mount Pearl, Gander, Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor, they're all getting over 25 per cent less per year. Grand Falls-Windsor is getting \$295,000 less per year; Gander, \$100,000 less per year; Corner Brook, \$395,000 less per year; and Mount Pearl, \$845,000 less per year.

Again, I talked to Mount Pearl City Council in one of their boardrooms, a few of the members, they are not happy, Speaker. So infrastructure funding has been a long-standing concern for the municipalities. Dating back as far as 2012, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador identified over a \$1-billion municipal infrastructure issue, and it's already exceeded its useful lifespan.

As we know, that \$1 billion now with inflation, with the costs gone up, you're probably looking at \$1.5 billion. So if the minister of the department wants to make adjustments to make it more fair, that's fine. Do it over 10 years, if you want, but they need more money, not less.

The big takeaways for me, from what I've heard, is MNL are looking for changes to the multi-year capital works. They wanted changes; they didn't want these changes. These are really big changes and MNL's big issue, as I've said, is they weren't consulted. They're being talked to now, but they weren't consulted in the beginning and a quick technical briefing before the budget comes out does not constitute consultation.

There is no increase in funding. As I said, there is actually a decrease, and MNL want a, immediate review, and I hope that's something the minister does.

One of the other things I did hear from municipalities is that when there is such a big shift like this in funding and how it's delivered, there's usually some kind of transition. You don't just cut it and then throw it out. As it sits now, municipalities essentially won't be able to apply for a year to get any work done. So we're going to lose one whole year, one whole construction season of a lot of these major municipalities not being able to get any work done.

We took a holistic look at this budget and put it in perspective, here's what I see in comparisons. This budget moves us further into a deficit, and that's not a sign of tightening up or spending smarter. We continue to hear the references of spending smarter from the Finance Minister, but when you compare, say, the 2025 budget to the 2026 budget, overall spending has gone up.

In closing, I'll put my time over to the other Members but I just want to say, again, there are good things in the 2026 budget, I will agree, but there are a lot of things missing. A lot of these levers we talked about for the last two, three months in here were not pulled, residents aren't happy and I just hope moving forward the government can put politics aside and do what's best for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I think he did a fantastic job –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. PARSONS: Yeah, he did. I won't have to mention now my issues with multi-year capital works because the Member did such a good job describing it. But I will mention, first of all, I don't know if congratulations are in order to anyone else here in the House, but I did get an either-sex Area 10 licence.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. PARSONS: I'm really looking forward to that. But we're looking forward to generally a really good summer, before this fall, of course.

I do want to mention a couple special celebrations going on in my district this summer, before we talk any further, first of which is the fifth annual Elmastukwek Mawio'mi, which is going on at Blow Me Down Cross Country Ski Club, the fifth year. Mawio'mi is sort of like a powwow; it's a Mi'kmaq celebration and it involves all kinds of cultural events. It's for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and it brings together the community to celebrate with music, drumming, dancing, storytelling, crafts, vendors. It's a great weekend, so I'd encourage people to get out. That's on the seventh to the ninth.

Of course, it's also the fifth anniversary of the Jigs & Wheels Festival in Corner Brook, which is a great event from July 4 to August 6. Jigs & Wheels is about bringing together music, celebration and food and ATV tourism, which is a really big thing. It is something that we took a big part in pioneering on the West Coast, in Corner Brook.

Of course, on August 8 to 15, the Summer Games will be in Corner Brook, which is a fantastic event. It's actually the 50th year for the games. It has brought together young athletes from all over our wonderful province. That is going to be a fantastic celebration over a week or so.

I am going to mention a few issues related to the budget and some of them I think my

colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands mentioned as well and, not surprisingly, we do sort of span the same sort of area.

The first one I want to mention is housing. Housing is a big issue with my constituency I hear from as well. One I'm going to mention is the need for more supportive housing. Again, I would say my colleague is also familiar with this project. In fact, it's in his district but I'll advocate for it because it does affect my constituents as well, a great supportive housing initiative that the Community Mental Health Initiative and the Corner Brook Status of Women are working on. The city has donated land and will provide services and they're working on capital funding through NLHC. Again, we're hoping to see some positive results from that soon.

The Crestview area, I think the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands does not give himself enough credit on this because I think that he has been – as mayor, I recall his advocacy on this file. He did show the dilapidated buildings that, again, had gone into ruin, absolutely. I don't think he gives himself enough credit because despite, I guess, what he was saying, he was successful in terms of getting 50 units committed to be rebuilt. Actually, I was at that announcement with –

E. JOYCE: (Inaudible) built.

J. PARSONS: No, no but the minister, at the time, was the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, who committed 50 units. The new minister has recommitted –

SPEAKER: I'll ask the Member to address the Chair, please.

J. PARSONS: – to follow through on those 50 units, which is great. So, right now, we have 26 units of the 50 tendered and there are 24 more to go. I'm sure that myself and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands will be advocating to the Housing Minister to make sure that gets done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: I was at the announcement of that funding.

Corner Brook Hotel is also a serious issue, which I agree with the Member on, it is again a very basic emergency shelter. It is right across from my office, right now, and it is something that deserves some attention. I'll agree with the Member on it, as well, from Bay of Islands, that it does in fact need more services to be effective. It does get visits regularly from the FACT team but also from the police, unfortunately.

Again, I've had a discussion, the minister has committed and he's talked to myself and the Member for Bay of Islands, he wants to convene a meeting to figure out ways to provide more support to Hotel Corner Brook. That is, again, another commitment that we hope to hold them to.

Another issue I want to mention is health care. Of course, it is a big issue in all of our districts, I'm absolutely sure, but back in January, I was told by senior staff at NL Health Services that a Family Care Team was opening in February and in Estimates last week, we were told that Family Care Team was still in planning but some hiring has been done.

I spoke with a nurse working in a Family Care Team yesterday at the event that my colleague mentioned and, in her opinion, the Family Care Teams are a superior way to provide primary care. So I look forward to seeing, I guess, the follow-through on that. I know it's coming, we don't have timelines yet, but I look forward to seeing that Family Care Team.

The budget did promise \$21 million for 45 new long-term care beds in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital. I think, as the

Member mentioned earlier, there are some difficulties getting that done. I hope that it was not premature, that announcement, because there's a big expectation in my district, anyway, that we get those long-term care beds. That's very important to us.

Child care, we've talked about child care a lot in this session. We've talked about ECEs. It's ECE Week. We have to celebrate them and their importance in our society. They provide a solid foundation for our children as they start their lives. Unfortunately, we still haven't seen any adjustments to the pay grid that was implemented for ECEs and I know there have been election commitments around sick-leave benefits and pension benefits. Those things need to happen, I think, in order for us to have sustainable child care and child education.

We've seen a pause this year, of course, in \$10 daycare spaces and we know the importance. Recently, we saw 11,000 daycare spaces created – \$10-a-day daycare spaces – and it has meant a really big difference for a lot of parents and to our economy because the lack of child care does force parents out of the workforce and it leads people to have fewer children and to have them later. We do have to figure out how to get more child care.

I understand the budget has 400 more spaces allocated which is good. I'm hoping that the department will see fit to find 30 of those spaces for the purpose-built daycare at the Marina Redmond Centre which I talked about earlier this week. That's a state-of-the-art facility. It has an operator already assigned to it who can welcome children and educators tomorrow. This is a great opportunity to expand daycare in the Corner Brook region.

Now, I'll take a little bit of a different track now and talk more generally about the budget. The budget was very much, I think, in its nature, sort of incremental. There weren't sweeping big changes in this budget

that we saw. We see now that we're going to go round out this decade with billion-dollar deficits. The biggest economic development idea that's been touted in this budget has been the floating drydock. We, unfortunately, don't know how much it will cost. We don't know when we'll build it and we don't know what the market is like for it, yet.

Our big financial move is to continue to pay off debt with increasing sinking funds, which the minister talks about a lot, but we're abandoning the Future Fund. So I think a very clever title that the minister could have used for this budget is: floating docks and sinking funds. Think about it for next year.

We're still very reliant on oil and we're not back in the oil business; we've never left. Just looking at our royalty revenue from the last five years, we've got in 2021, \$1.2 billion in royalty revenue; \$1.9 million in 2022; \$1.3 million in 2023; \$1.4 million in 2024; and \$1.7 million last year. We're still in the oil business, absolutely.

The Future Fund, which I was very saddened to see a demise of it, was a great way for us to put aside a few percent of these one-time oil windfalls. Once this oil comes out, it's gone. These sovereign wealth funds, like the Future Fund, is way to guarantee some future –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's a little loud in here.

J. PARSONS: – some fiscal discipline so that instead of spending everything we make today, we put aside a little bit for our future generations, or unexpected challenges or opportunities for economic development.

Last year, of that \$1.7 billion that we got, we put away \$108 million, bringing the Future Fund up to \$533 million. Just based on,

again a basic calculation, earning a modest 5 per cent a year, that fund could be \$36 billion in 50 years.

That was a real disappointment for me because it signalled the approach that this government is going to take, not a logical approach, but an approach that's best for Newfoundland and Labrador's long term, but an approach that frees up money now.

That brings us to, I guess, the topic of the week, which is Churchill Falls. We're seeing a very different approach with Churchill Falls. Of course, we've heard how terrible the MOU is, that it's a repeat of 1969, but then we got a report that, in a lot of ways, validates the MOU; but the big difference we see is that it advocates a riskier, more entrepreneurial approach that tips the balance more toward economic development and developing Gull Island ourselves, instead of mitigating our financial risk and reaping the rewards sooner.

So ironically, government has been attacking this 2 per cent escalation as a financial mistake because it's not going to maximize the long-term economic benefits, but at the same time they are abandoning billions of dollars of benefits by abandoning the Future Fund in favour of getting cash in the current budget now.

Those are a few little things; I will cede my time now. I'd like to thank everyone for their comments on the budget, we've learned a lot here and I look forward to hearing more.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker.

First of all, bad timing, but I'd like to wish Happy Birthday to the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: We'll sing to him in a few minutes. I'm sure *Hansard* can figure out what I mean. But, in any event, he's done a great job. Obviously, we have been missing one of our Members this week due to an illness, but he stepped in and done a great job working on behalf, as always, of his constituents in Virginia Waters - Pleasantville. Anyway, I was just going to use his name, but I won't. He does a great job and I appreciate his support, his leadership in his role as Deputy Opposition House Leader, especially over the course of this week.

Deputy Speaker, I want to take a little bit of time during the Budget Speech to talk about a lot of what I've been asking questions about over the course of the past week, certainly this week and leading into this week as well, and that's the report we received into an analysis on the MOU.

I've certainly been asking questions in the last couple of days about who has provided information to reach conclusions that are in this report. I think the last time I spoke to the budget I talked about previous public inquiries and this, I remind everybody and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, was a public inquiry as well.

We've had the Muskrat Falls inquiry. I mean, it's somewhat similar, we're talking about the same river, the Churchill River. I certainly acknowledge that the amount of information that went into the Muskrat Falls inquiry, the deal that was done, for a project that was constructed and near completion at that point in time, was a much bigger scope than a review of 30-odd page MOU.

I think it's relevant if we look at, actually, what was produced and the information that was publicized from that public inquiry

during the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Just as an example, this is a list and I think I'll read out here, Deputy Speaker, about the individuals – not the witnesses but the individuals who provided submissions, give their information. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would know who provided that information to Justice LeBlanc. So they knew when he was making his conclusions, when he was making his recommendations, they knew who he based it on and what he based it on.

So a list of these people: Alex Aylward, Astaldi, Brian Duffett, Cabot Martin, Centre Helios, Ches Crosbie, Conseil des Innu de Ekuanitshit, David Vardy, Ron Penney, Des Sullivan, Dawson Milley – I hear a lot of huffing over there. Sorry the list is long, but that's what you get when you're transparent and open.

Derm Bennett, Lew Fizzard, Don Keats, Ed Stratton, Bob Williams, Dr. Stephen Bruneau, Ed Hollett, Edmund Martin, Frank Davis, Gabe Gregory, Gene Long, George Power, the Grand Riverkeeper/Labrador Land Protectors, Heather Young, Innu Nation, Jason Muise, Llewelyn Pritchard, Marcus Leja, Marie Vardy, Maurice Adams, Mercy Centre for Ecology and Justice, New Democratic Party Caucus, Nunatsiavut Government, Office of the Leader of the Official Opposition, Ontario-Muskrat Falls Solidarity Coalition, Penelope Alderdice, Peter Austin, Sister Elizabeth Davis, Walter Thomas Beckett.

I'm sorry some Members didn't want to sit through that 30 seconds, but if the Premier would answer a question about who gave the information to the report, we would have saved ourselves a lot of time, but here we are. Certainly, one of the reasons we've heard that the panel does not want to speak to this and does not want to provide the information is because there's commercial sensitivity in the information that they have, and I totally agree. I don't want any commercially sensitive information to be made public. I want to make sure that

Newfoundland and Labrador's and NL Hydro's information is protected as negotiations start and move toward hopefully a good and final MOU that's great for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Submissions were made in the Muskrat Falls Inquiry, which were protected with commercial sensitivity. Those submissions were made by Nalcor Energy, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Astaldi Canada, the Muskrat Falls Concerned Citizens Coalition, the Consumer Advocate, Nalcor Energy, Astaldi, Concerned Citizens Coalition, Consumer Advocate – there were multiple submissions – and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So believe it or not, it is possible to have disclosure while still protecting the commercial sensitivity nature of the information that's been told to a commissioner. We don't have that here. We do not have that here in this situation, and the questions that we continually ask, it's not that I want to know the names of these individuals; it's that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and the Premier, the Premier and the Minister of Energy should know when they make a decision that says you should do this because this is the pricing mechanism you should chase down, you should look for. Why should I do it, because who was telling me to do that?

What they're asking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to believe and to trust is that decisions are being made without knowing where that information on the recommendation came from. Surely, that's not the right public policy to move forward on the most important project in the history of this province. Surely, not only me, not only Members of the Opposition, but the Premier and the minister and the Cabinet making the decisions should know where that information on the recommendations is coming from. It baffles me that they don't want to know.

Why do we need to know the qualifications? I ask that question, if we're not going to know the names of the individuals, we should know at least the qualifications. When you go through the court process, it's not really called expert evidence that's given. People are qualified to give their opinion on a subject matter.

In the Muskrat Falls inquiry, four people that I could find today when I did my search were qualified. A man by the name of Dr. Bent Flyvbjerg. He was qualified to give his opinion on megaproject management and research methodology. Dr. Jason Churchill was qualified as an expert, as a historian and researcher with particular expertise in energy politics, especially pertaining to negotiations, to develop the hydroelectric resources of the Churchill River in Labrador. Dr. Guy Holburn, who is a member of this panel, was qualified as an expert in the area of regulation and governance of the energy sector. George Jergeas was qualified to give opinion evidence on the subject of project management.

Of course, when they speak to those issues, able to give their opinion on that subject matter, we know who they are. We know what their background is. We know the history of what they've done to develop that knowledge in that specific area. That's why we trust them. That's why Justice LeBlanc trusted them. That's why Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can say, okay, he knows a lot about this. He's been doing this for 30, 40 years. He has a huge history in this particular piece of study or information or work.

We don't know the names of these individuals. We don't know what their qualifications are. Yet, they're telling us, they're telling the Premier and the Energy Minister, how to negotiate a \$225 billion deal. It boggles the mind.

Despite asking all these questions; we haven't got answers. In fact, we get asked

questions back as if we're still the government. It amazes me.

I think the Member for Burin - Grand Bank mentioned the group of kids earlier today in his budget speech from Lamaline. When Question Period was over, we happened to go outside and take their picture and chat with them. Great bunch of young fellows and I said, did you guys like it? Did you have a good time? They said yeah, it was great, it was awesome, the b'ys never answered a question. These are 17- and 18-year-old kids, Deputy Speaker, that said that to me. True story. If that's what 17- and 18-year-olds take from watching Question Period in the House of Assembly, it was a little bit funny, but in the grand scheme of things it's not a joke. It's not a joke. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians expect answers. Teenagers can joke about it, but it's a serious matter.

I want to talk a little bit more about expertise related to this particular MOU. As I've said during my questions and as I've said a lot during the course of the budget debate, we did have experts here on the floor of the House of Assembly – this is, of course, different than the Muskrat Falls inquiry – in relation specifically to the advice that NL Hydro was provided and GNL was provided on the MOU itself. This is from *Hansard*. This is their expertise. This is quoted directly from *Hansard*.

My apologies if you have to sit through this again and you don't want to, but this is the information that I think the public needs to rehear, again, and why expert qualifications are important.

"We predominantly have experience in electricity market analysis, in multiple markets across Canada and the US. Specifically, myself" – this is Mr. Chee-Aloy for those of you who were here, I am sure they remember him – "I have over 25 years of experience in electricity market analysis across Canada and the US.

"... with respect to hydroelectric generation, I have a history of – in addition to the analysis – contracting for hydroelectric generation across Canada, predominantly ... Ontario. I have worked on hydro matters in BC, in Quebec, in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the US in the Northeast, specifically Maine, regarding some of the export projects into the US."

Mr. Yauch as well, "I oversee a lot of our price forecasting and market analysis across Canada and across the Northeast United States I've worked on this project for two years, along with my colleague. We recognize the importance of the deal and how important it is to the province."

"We were engaged to provide assessments of the various markets to which supply from Churchill Falls new developments could be exported to and sold to, and valuing those projects with respect to how to craft that in perspective deals going forward."

"We would look at assessing various markets with respect to the need for electricity supply, how hydroelectric generation can meet those needs and how does hydroelectric generation stack up as an option for supply to meet those needs."

So I asked the questions in the House of Assembly today: Who is the expert that provided the evidence to the review panel about market valuation for prices on hydroelectric projects? It's not Mr. Wilson. My understanding is he's a chartered accountant. It's not Mr. Huskisson. My understanding is he did work for Emera, a former hydro utility, but he doesn't have the expertise necessarily specific to market analysis. Not Mr. Holburn, as I said, was qualified to give opinion evidence to the Muskrat Falls inquiry but he was qualified to give an opinion on regulatory matters, not on market pricing.

The most important thing that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to get out of a deal with Hydro-Québec is the

right price. We've had the wrong price, and we continue to have the wrong price since 1969 – 0.2 cents. We don't want to do another deal at 0.2 cents.

How do we know what is the right deal? Experts tell you. Experts tell you how to get the right price and what the right price is. Do we have that? Not that I know of. Not that the minister knows of. Not that the Premier knows of, but they're going to go ahead and negotiate a deal anyways.

I don't try to cook something in my kitchen without reading a cookbook first. I let the experts tell me how to do it, but they're going to do a deal with Hydro-Québec for over \$200 billion for years and years and years without knowing why they're doing the deal that they've done, without knowing who told them to do the deal that they've done.

It is an unbelievably, extraordinarily dangerous path that this government is going down and all we are asking is for them to do their due diligence to determine where the information came from, who provided it and should it be trusted. I do not think that that is too much to ask when we're looking at the most important deal in the history of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I want to talk about the 2 per cent escalated clause. Not only was the price for the 1969 Churchill Falls Contract a thorn in the side of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for decades and generations, the fact that the price didn't go up; it's the fact that the price didn't – wait for it – escalate. Everybody wanted it to escalate because the prices in Quebec were going up and the price in Newfoundland and Labrador was staying the same.

That wasn't fair. We tried for years. We went to court. People in this House of Assembly passed legislation to try and get that power back. The Supreme Court of Canada said no, you can't do that. We went

to court to say this is not a fair contract. The Supreme Court of Canada said yes, it is. So we had to wait. We had to wait until Quebec were ready to deal with us.

It was an unfortunate, painful part of our history. But we're here now in a moment where we can finally get the right price and make sure the price continues to go up, not next year, not in five years, but for 50 to 65 years, up, up, up every single year.

I won't apologize for trying to get more money for Newfoundlanders over time. I won't apologize for getting money for the next generation of Newfoundlanders compared to this generation. I think that's a wise, prudent policy decision that this government should consider for throwing it out, because there's one throwaway line, which I'll get to in their report. It should be a priority for any government to get more money over time, if and when electricity prices in Quebec and external markets outside of Quebec go up. As I said, to ensure it benefits future Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

They say that we sold out to try to get more money upfront and, at the same time, they're saying we're selling out because we're trying to escalate the money over time. It can't be both – it can't be both.

I can't believe that they're looking to not escalate over time. So if they want to look at a chart and sell it to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians where the price of Gull Island goes like this and down over time, good luck selling that to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We were accused that we hid this, the 2 per cent clause. Easy answer to that, read the MOU. Not only that, read *Hansard*. The 2 per cent escalator was discussed here in this House of Assembly. As usual, the Conservative government are pretending that they discovered something. They discovered something that was talked about a year and a half ago. It's nothing new here.

The Members opposite, I don't think, were listening during the course of the debate.

But I know one Member, I hope he was listening because he was asking questions. He was asking questions about the 2 per cent clause. He's now the Minister of Jobs. This is what he said: "Fair enough. I'll move along.

Was J.P. Morgan involved in determining the escalator of 2 per cent?" He asked that specific question.

Mr. Akimov from J.P. Morgan said: "The answer is yes. Again, this is one number that was agreed upon by both parties. Our job was to opine on the reasonableness of this number, just like any other number in the MOU" – just for the record, he's an expert that was qualified to give opinion evidence and that was public and everybody knew who he was – "and we do think that a 2 per cent escalator is appropriate in light of general macroeconomic conditions and our analysis of this particular asset."

The hon. Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay as he was at the time: "So what was the 2 per cent based on? Was that based on CPI, consumer price index?" Mr. Akimov said: "CPI was one of the many factors that we considered when we arrived at this conclusion, yes." Imagine, a question and an answer, who would've thought in the House of Assembly?

The hon. Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay continued: "So I would just like to highlight for the record here if they're using 2 per cent as a factor for CPI and a 2 per cent linear escalation, that the inflation rate, close to it, CPI, have averaged 3.92 per cent from 1969 to 2024. Over the past 55 years, the CPI has been 3.9; so double what we're using here as an escalation.

"But, again, I will look to move on."

No, no, no, Mr. Akimov didn't want to let him move on because he had answer to that: "I just want to make sure I want to clarify this, because it's an important point, and if you just look at the historic data, you may take a view that historic inflation wasn't that higher. That may be true – I haven't seen the data, but what we need to think about here is that the escalator here is on top of the cost-plus pass-through mechanism.

"If there is inflation, it will impact the costs of the project. The costs will go up. We do have something in place that's built in to address your concerns. Inflation may go higher than 2 per cent. That will impact the costs of the project. They will go up. Those costs will be passed through with this mechanism.

"So 2 per cent is on top of that. Therefore, we feel it's actually an appropriate construct here that gives us comfort that there is a risk mitigant against possible future inflation. Headline number which may be higher or lower than historic, we do think there is a protection mechanism here in place."

So not only did that Member ask questions, the Members of the caucus at the time, if they were paying attention, would have recognized that the 2 per cent clause was an issue to be asked about and they did ask about it, so they did know about it. To stand here in the House of Assembly after they get a report to say, did I know about it? I did because I was paying attention in the debate and I read the MOU.

L. PADDOCK: Then why did you vote for it?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: I voted for it because I had a job to do. I believed in the job I had to do. I believed in the experts that said this was a good deal. I believed in Mr. Akimov when he said it was a reasonable number and I believe that every MHA should have voted with their conscience and their beliefs and their understanding of the MOU that day.

What I know is every MHA did not do that, and that includes the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So when they stand up and said I didn't vote for it because I didn't have the information, they knew about the 2 per cent – they knew about the 2 per cent. The fact that they say now they didn't know about it but *Hansard* says they did, maybe I'll ask them a question on that tomorrow and see if I get answer why the story is changed. Do you know what? I won't because I won't get an answer.

Deputy Premier of the day, a quote from him" Now, there's lots in this people want to read, how they come to the pricing and their 2 per cent per annum." He knew about it. He knew about it, too. He mentioned it.

We have that before us now. We have that back in the House of Assembly again. Just to remind everybody that the 2 per cent escalator clause was discussed, asked about and answered.

Now what we're hearing is the 2 per cent escalator clause could cost us \$30 billion. That's not what the report says. The report says due to the structure of the deal, that includes a 2 per cent revenue escalation and the amortization and PPA periods, there will be "debt, dividend, and equity residual obligation of the Gull Island Joint Venture of \$30.8 billion (nominal) or \$1.0 billion" NPV.

The Minister of Energy likes to use NPV when it's convenient for him and nominal when it's convenient for him. Let's use the nominal because that's the one he likes to use to make it sound like the MOU is not as good as it really is. The nominal is \$1 billion, but what they forget to tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is that it's a Joint Venture – 60 per cent is the responsibility of NL Hydro. So the \$30 billion has now become \$1 billion, which now becomes \$600 million

because it's 60 per cent of the Joint Venture.

A \$30-million accusation of a mistake is \$600 million. It's a big difference. That's a big difference. Now that's the big discovery, by the way, \$600 million. What does that mean? It means that after a 50-year deal is done, if it's constructed this way, NL Hydro would have a \$600-million obligation on a multi-billion-dollar asset that we own, with upwards of 50 years of its life left, owing \$600 million on Gull Island with 50 years left. That sounds like a pretty good deal. Fifty more years of electricity of our province, that we would continue to be able to sell based on whatever deal comes next.

Another thing to keep in mind, these numbers are based on one possible way of structuring the 2 per cent escalator, which hadn't been agreed to yet. Definitive agreements were only supposed to be signed in April of 2026.

I can tell you my thoughts during the course of the negotiations, the very little amount of time I had, there was a lot of work to do. There was an extreme amount of work to do to get the right price, the right terms, the right deal for Newfoundland and Labrador and this would have been part of it.

Maybe as premier I wouldn't have put that in. I can tell you, it's off the table now. They don't want to negotiate in public. Guess what? They have, because this is gone. Maybe I would have said as premier, I'm willing to take that off the table if you give me a little bit more. That's not happening. They're not getting any more for talking this off the table. It's gone.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. HOGAN: Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: If you read the MOU, it guarantees the revenues to Newfoundland would escalate 2 per cent but the specific mechanism of how that was financed and structured was left to the final agreements.

I talked about the Muskrat Falls inquiry, talked about the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay - sorry, the current Minister of Jobs - how he had the ability to ask questions. He didn't listen to the answers but he had the ability to ask questions. That's all I'm asking; give us the ability to ask questions.

How did they come to their conclusions? We told you how they came to theirs in the MOU, if you cared to listen. But the government has refused to make them available. The government has refused to tell us who they are. The sad thing is that they don't know it's there to protect them. Because if they sign a deal and five years or 10 years, if it's a bad deal, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians won't even know who gave that advice to sign the bad deal, but they'll know that they signed it.

I am very curious to see how this government convinces Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and justifies to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that we don't deserve increase payments over time. You can structure this any number of ways. Deputy Speaker, it's like your mortgage. Your mortgage rates are flat, but you own much more of your house at the end of your 30-year mortgage than you do at the beginning. But that's just the way it's structured. You can structure it totally differently, but you might not be able to afford it.

This 2 per cent escalator clause is one way to structure the deal. One way that we felt Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will best benefit for future generations. Was it going to make it into the final agreements? Maybe, maybe not. I can tell you now, it's not - I can tell you now, it's not.

So when I ask questions of the Premier: What is your deal going to look like? Who's going to pay for the transmission? What are you going to give up in order to get more power? Is the price going to go down over time on Gull Island? These are the things that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need to know. He hasn't answered one question except for this one. This Premier has told Newfoundlanders and Labradorians he will not sign a deal with an escalator clause.

That's the only clear thing that has come out of this report. The only substantive thing we have from this Premier on this deal is that the price that NL Hydro and Newfoundland and Labrador receives for Gull Island and the Churchill Falls upgrade will go down year after year. He's committed to that. He's accused us of saying that's a bad deal. If it's a bad deal, it means he's not going to do it.

So Newfoundlanders and Labradorians now know, after seven months in government, after a debate in the House of Assembly where they wouldn't vote, they know one thing: Gull Island will deliver less money year over year when this Premier and this Energy Minister signs their deal with Hydro-Québec. That is a sad day for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre and Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I had planned what I was going to speak about, but in view of a few topics, I want to address them first. I'll start with the Churchill Falls MOU because I've heard my name taken in vain, or referred to, and defended as well, so I figure there's an opportunity here to just say a few things on it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) same thing.

J. DINN: The same thing, yes.

You know, a year ago when we had the debate in the House of Assembly, we had four days of it and something, at the time, that we, as Opposition parties, demanded and got, we also had, at that time, the caucus's received funding to engage our own experts to actually help us take apart the MOU so that we could ask some questions and have that understanding before we met with the experts.

That's something that's missing here. We have a report – and this is the thing that troubles me with this report – that we have no opportunity really to question it or take it apart. We don't know the experts they consulted. Were there submissions from the public or not? We don't know.

But I do know that last year – because I do remember listening to the announcement and thinking, wow, if this is as good as it sounds, it's going to be a good deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. But then the natural skepticism sets in.

I do remember, though, coming back in January for the special debate, and my colleague from Labrador West, we were talking about how we're going to proceed. I do remember saying to him, I said, I don't know if I can vote for this, at this point in time. But it was very clear from the Member that he had little choice but to vote in favour of it because the people in his district had made it very clear that he had to. It represented a lifeline. It was a lifeline and the future of Labrador West. To put it bluntly – and I had been up there a few times already – if we wait until 2041, that will spell the end of Labrador West, at least that was the fear.

I've heard Fermont thrown up and how well it's doing. The only new development there is the barracks, I think, for the fly-in, fly-out

workers. A lot of people in Fermont actually come over to Labrador West for a variety of things. It's the hub.

But Labrador West has been fighting for its survival. So it put me in a difficult position because here are my choices: either I vote with the Member, or the two of us vote at opposite ends, which is something I was prepared to do because I did respect his point of view, or I abstain. I rejected that last one, Speaker, because there's no option, but the other part of it was I was put in here to vote, to make decisions, and that was always the thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: No matter how hard they were, I was put in here to make decisions, pure and simple. I had no ability to walk away from it.

So I will say this, at the end of those four days and during that debate, we still had a lot of questions that we wanted answered on the MOU. For example, the 15-year exclusivity clause, that troubled me because I was concerned what if Hydro-Québec didn't follow-through, what would that mean for us and our ability to seek other investors?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's hard to hear the speaker.

J. DINN: It's interesting that my colleague said, well, you got no worries on that, they've already started the ground work or they've already started the investigations. They're already moving ahead. At that point then, that was one of the main objections, the main concerns I had.

Did I understand everything that the experts said? Maybe not but I did my own research, I did it with the people we brought in and I made sure I informed myself as much as I could. What I came away with, it seemed

like it was on a good deal, but I'll say this, I was not prepared also to vote against an agreement especially in a public place with the other negotiator, Quebec, watching, because to me it's always important – I come from a union point of view – you always give support to your negotiating team. You do not undermine them publicly – period.

The independent Members and the NDP, at that time, we went out and we started pushing for an independent review. We sent that letter to everyone. There was an opportunity for all people to be part of that and to shape how that committee looked.

The thing was, this would allow negotiations to proceed because nothing was finalized until there were definitive agreements. Then I understood there was going to be another vote on that, at that time. There was going to be yet another chance to vote on it. The MOU was not the binding contract. The MOU was just a memorandum of understanding.

I can tell you this, as a former president of the Teachers' Union, if all I had to go on was an MOU, it means nothing until I actually have a defined collective agreement signed, that's what counts.

At the time, our purpose was to get the answers, to have the oversight, but here's what we envisioned. I did not need to know, as a Member of the Third Party or in the Opposition, the commercial details and so on and so forth, but I did expect this team would meet regularly with Cabinet and would share the details and they would have a lot more detail and sensitive details because they're bound by that Cabinet privacy privilege and so on and so forth. That was the plan.

In the end, I wanted something from them to say yes, this makes sense, here's what's what, at the end of it.

Anyway, the new election comes – and I do remember speaking to the Premier outside, especially when he released the letters, and I said, good on you. At least now we understand what was going on there. We still had concerns. I did offer, at that time, I said I think it would be worth our while to bring the people – maybe to have input from them in the construction of this new Review Committee and how it was going to be shaped or whether the one that was on existence could be salvaged in some way, shape or form.

None of that happened and now we have a report in front of us which I guess, in many ways, we're expected to take at blind faith. I understand if we can't be privy to who the experts were, but I do have a problem, Speaker, when the Premier says that he is not unaware. That troubles me.

It doesn't matter what party the Premier is but if the leader of the province doesn't know and doesn't seem to push on this, then there's a problem. It bothers me to no end because we're all, now, taking this on blind faith. We don't know who the experts were. We have already started to look at our own experts to look at this and see what we can do because we have no way of determining if what's said in this report is indeed accurate and what's it based on.

When people said I voted for the MOU, yes, I voted for the MOU. I voted for the process. I voted for a process that would allow negotiations to take place. I voted for a process that would mean that Labrador West would not find itself in some dire straits. I voted for a process knowing that there would be definitive agreements coming, again, that we would have yet another opportunity to vote on. I voted for a process knowing that there was at least an Oversight Committee there asking those questions.

That's what I voted for but if that was the final agreement at that time, my vote would have been much different. As it was, this

was the way forward and I guess that was my approach to it at that time.

The other issue before I get into what I want to talk about the last 10 minutes or so: St. Clare's. I am a supporter of St. Clare's. It's the only hospital I go to. I do not go to the Health Sciences. Not because it's not a good hospital but I feel comfortable at St. Clare's. I will tell you this, I've heard from the get-go about how the hospital is 100 years old. It's not 100 years old. One building is 100 years old. That's the white house on the corner of St. Clare Avenue and Lemarchant Road.

I've said this over and over and over. I guess the newest part of the hospital is only six years older than the Health Sciences, so in a few years, we're going to be replacing the Health Sciences, too. The next newest part of it was built in 1962, 10 years before that.

At the time, I remember when it was announced – which, by the way, was not a part of the Health Accord – talking to a doctor, a specialist I was seeing there, and I was asking him at the time, tell me about St. Clare's. His response was the hospital is fine itself. The issue we have here is the fact that we've got a lot of acute-care beds being taken up by people who need to be in long-term care.

So yes, I've been in the emergency department, both as a patient and accompanying someone else and I've seen the crowded corridors. I've also seen the tremendous care of the workers there. But just like my questions today on the urgent care clinic, it comes down to you can open up a new building, but if you don't have the staff there, if people don't have primary health care, if they don't have a doctor or collaborative care clinic to go to, guess where they're going? They're going to the emergency room for everything – everything – that could have been taken care of if they had a primary health care provider. That's the fact.

If we had better supports for people so that they could stay at home and be healthier and have the food and so on and so forth, if they had long-term care beds that would allow for the care, we probably would have more space in our hospitals and the emergency rooms wouldn't be cluttered.

The one thing that I learned from being behind the waiting room is the number of paramedics waiting to offload their patients because there is no bed to move them up to. So unless you solve the problems that underline, the human resources piece, the social determinants of health, we're not going to solve the problem; we're just going to build more hospitals and have long waits, just in different facilities.

I will talk a little bit about the AG report. I think, if anything else here, I've exhausted my anger in some ways in the last time I spoke about housing. But it demonstrates, if nothing else, a failure to plan or prepare. There's a current list in here for the current Minister of Housing as well, I think. I'm hoping that lesson is going to be learned but I do remember in 2019, when I was first elected and the Leader of the Party and I, our very first thing we had, in her district, was a public meeting about an emergency, or a shelter in her district. There had been an altercation and a killing outside the house on Bond Street. That was the very first community meeting that we had.

I'll say this, because this talks about how they had to more or less come up with something urgently, and they had to respond why they didn't go and follow necessarily the standard procedures. I can tell you right now that long before this hotel existed, we could see the problem coming. It was growing. It was heading our way.

I don't know how many times I would speak about increases in rent, the fact that we saw the people in tents and so on and so forth, but I can tell you, Speaker, they did not just show up there one day. What I mean by that is this, they were already living in tents in

different places; they just coalesced up there. That was not the first example of people living in the rough. They had already been living in the rough. They now moved it to the hill and then down to the Colonial Building.

I know that in 2022, I was speaking and my colleague speaking about the need to eliminate rooming houses. I know I had spoken to various ministers about it at the time, in the previous government, about why not use the Grace General Hospital, to use that building, repurpose it in some form, renovate it and turn it into affordable housing, supportive housing.

Of course, by that time, I was told that it was beyond the repair. The only thing we could do was tear it down. I often wondered about that because it was built in the same vintage, same time frame as Holy Heart and you couldn't destroy that unless you hit it with a direct hit with a thermonuclear bomb, that's for sure. It was well built.

I remember trying to keep an 82-year-old woman from being evicted from a St. John's housing project, in a wheelchair, and with that, became more prevalent.

I remember a year ago, I think I was, walking out at the end of the day and here was a gentleman walking up with his dog, Sailor – nowhere to go. It was the middle of February, at the time, and it was freezing and there was no place to go. The only thing I could do at the end of it, after exhausting everything, was to provide him money and put him into a Tim Horton's to keep warm overnight.

So, I guess this has been weighing on me for the last few years because in my district and in my colleague's district, and I would say in the Member for Mount Scio, there are housing issues there. People are struggling and people are still in tents, that, I can tell you, in my district and other districts. You can't see them but they're there. I've visited a few of the sites. They're still there.

It's interesting, seeing March 2023, it says that the owner of 106 Airport Road first approached the Minister of Housing related to the facility of the corporation for emergency housing purposes. Now, at that time, when I look at page 12 here in this, it talks about the fact that that shelter, that hotel, was being considered for a wide range of potential shelter and housing options. So it was not about the current model that was being used down there, but, even at that time, there was a recognition, before there was any talk of the Horizons, there was already a recognition that there was a problem growing and we had to deal with it. That's the fact that the owner came to and this was a way of providing these emergency shelters.

Two years later, of course, after the deal had been done, it was sold to an investor in Ontario. I guess they figured with a lucrative government contract, this was a smart investment.

Now, when I look through this, I can see there was just, I would say, a lack of anticipation, a lack of planning. The number comes out that \$706,000 per person. I was asked about this in the media today. You spend what you need to spend to make sure people are well-housed, but I will say, we can do better. We can spend our money better and have better outcomes, I would say.

I guess, to the minister – he and I have spoken about this – in my last 35 seconds, Speaker, the promise has been made that the people who are there will have places to live by the end of the year. The question is going to become where? Are they going to be Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units? What happens to the people who are depending on them? But, more importantly, what are the supports that are going to be in place? Because I think that's the other part and I'll come back to that.

I've had this conversation with the minister, but I'm going to say it now: What are the

supports? Put them in place or this is not going to work.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

It's getting late and we're all getting very tired, but it's a privilege to stand here in the House of Assembly.

Speaker, as the critic for Social Supports, I'm also the critic for Persons with Disabilities, and I just want to speak about Persons with Disabilities throughout the province and about the importance of accessibility, inclusion and dignity and the ongoing work that still must be done in this province to remove the barriers for persons living with disabilities.

Speaker, when we talk about disability issues, we often focus on programs and policies and legislation. Those things do matter greatly, but at the heart of this conversation are people, individuals and families who simply want the same opportunities that everyone else has. The ability to participate in their community, to access the services, to find employment, to attend school, to live independently and to be treated with dignity and respect.

I want to acknowledge that there have been important steps forward in this province and the recent passing of a piece of legislation with the Disability Advocate by government is certainly one of those very important steps. I supported that legislation because I believe that independent advocacy matters. I believe that persons with disabilities and their families need a voice, someone who can help them navigate the system, identify the barriers, hold government accountable when supports are not meeting the needs of the people.

But passing legislation is only the beginning. Now that the legislation is passed, we must move quickly to fully establish the office and the Disability Advocate must become a strong, active, visible office that truly works for the people it was created to serve and, at the same time, we must ensure the broader disability issues do not get lost or buried.

Many persons with disabilities and advocacy organizations across Newfoundland continue to express concern that the disability portfolio itself lacks visibility and focus. Speaker, this is not new, but they want to know that disability issues remain a priority every single day, not just when we're working on legislation.

Accessibility is one of the most important conversations we can have when discussing inclusion. Too often, accessibility is viewed only through the lens of physical access – ramps and elevators, parking spaces and those things are critically important. Yes, we still have major gaps in physical accessibility throughout the province.

There are public spaces, today, that people simply cannot enter independently. There are businesses and community facilities where barriers still exist. There are government buildings that are not fully accessible. Even this Confederation Building complex and the House of Assembly itself, accessibility remains a challenge. That should concern all of us.

Accessibility is not a favour. It is not an optional feature. It is a basic human right. Accessibility goes far beyond physical access alone. Accessibility also means making sure information can be understood and accessed by people with visual impairments. It means ensuring communication supports are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. It means understanding the needs of persons living with autism. It means recognizing sensory overload. Sometimes we fail to

recognize the invisible disabilities because they're not immediately seen. Invisible disabilities are real and the barriers associated with them are very real.

If we truly want inclusive communities, we must understand that the very important point is that inclusion only exists when people can fully access and participate in those spaces. True inclusion means people can participate equally, independently, safely and with dignity. Accessibility cannot be an afterthought.

That leads to an important question for government. Since October 2025, has there been any new accessibility standards drafted for provincial buildings? What progress has been made in identifying and removing barriers in government facilities?

I want to acknowledge one positive initiative that has provided important financial support for persons with disabilities and that's the benefit of \$400 per month for eligible individuals between the ages of 18 and 64. A barrier still exists and that is the ability to access the disability tax credit.

The barrier with the disability tax credit is the fact that people are having difficulty finding physicians fill out the forms. It's simply because some physicians do not understand the patient so they just don't want to fill out the form when they don't understand or know the patient. As a result, people who should qualify for supports are being left behind. When access to the federal disability tax credit is the gateway to provincial benefits, these barriers become very, very serious.

We also know that disability and poverty are deeply connected. Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience financial insecurity, housing instability, unemployment and social isolation. Despite these challenges, persons with disabilities continue contributing immensely to our communities. Persons with disabilities are not asking for special treatment. They're

asking for fairness and equal opportunity. They're asking for barriers to be removed so they can participate fully in society.

We must continue working towards a Newfoundland and Labrador where accessibility and inclusion are built into every part of our province, not added later after people raise concerns. A province where children with disabilities can fully participate in schools and recreation; where adults with disabilities can access employment and housing. A province where seniors aging with disabilities can remain connected to their communities and where government services are accessible to everyone. A province where people with disabilities feel seen, heard, respected and valued. Accessibility is fundamental to inclusion.

Speaker, before I end, I just want to talk about the transitional supportive living initiative. The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the independent auditor's report that was released today, Speaker, there has been up to 150 residents at 106 Horizons; 40 who are chronically homeless, homeless for several years, and have now successfully transitioned to permanent housing after receiving wraparound services, wraparound supports. That is key. Putting a roof over someone's head, an individual who needs additional supports, will not work.

Seventy-five are still residents at 106 Horizons receiving care, receiving wraparound supports. Another 35 were also residents there, but for reasons, they couldn't complete the program and they left after various lengths of time. Speaker, I have great respect for the Auditor General. I've worked alongside her and I respect her work. But this report reduces the entire 106 Horizons initiative to a simplistic and misleading calculation, and I have a problem with that. The approach ignores the broader purpose of the program and the complexity of chronic homelessness and addiction.

Speaker, the work of End Homelessness St. John's has to be respected. Their mission, their overall vision is that everyone has a place to call home. I will stand in this House of Assembly any day or any night and support the work of End Homelessness St. John's.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers on this side of the House, are House Leaders now ready to vote on the amendment?

All those in favour of the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The amendment has been defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

SPEAKER: We are now on the main budget motion.

Do we have any speakers to the main budget motion, or are we calling the question on that?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, that debate do now be adjourned.

SPEAKER: It's been moved that debate do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday dear Bernie,
Happy Birthday to you!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House do now adjourn. Birthday cake at Bernie's.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: I must say that little display of comradery would bring a tear to a glass eye.

The House is now adjourned until tomorrow, being Wednesday, May 27, 10 a.m.

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