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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin, joining us in the public gallery today is a delegation of students and their chaperones from Mealy Mountain Collegiate in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: This group was awarded the provincial travel grant to visit post-secondary institutions and cultural facilities within St John's.

Welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Bonavista, Exploits, Ferryland, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans and Harbour Main.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I wish to celebrate and pay tribute to a local physician/surgeon at the Dr. G. B. Cross Memorial Hospital in Clarenville who will be retiring after April 1, 2024. Ryno and his wife Caro arrived in Clarenville on March 1995, and I first met them providing a tour of the Clarenville Middle School with their two young children, Nina and Ruby. Not only did they fall in love with the school, they later served as school council representatives shortly thereafter and volunteered frequently at the school.

Since arriving from Cape Town, South Africa, Dr. Verster has completed thousands of surgeries and procedures for the residents of the District of Bonavista and

Clarenville area. With a welcoming and reassuring personality and an elite skill set, he has served the residents of the area commendably and we owe him a debt of gratitude.

As one of two surgeons serving the region, he was frequently on call 24-7. Dr. Verster is a shining star in our health care system and his practice, over the past number of decades, is greatly appreciated.

I ask Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in acknowledging the service, commitment and dedication of this honourable physician to the residents of the District of Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I would like to acknowledge the Jubilee Pentecostal Temple Community Cafe of Botwood. Under the leadership of Pastors Moral and Tracey Bess and a number of volunteers, the cafe takes place the first Wednesday of each month from February to June and, again, September to November.

This past year, the cafe has served an average of 225 people, with a total of 1,867 meals in the community. In addition, the cafe has participated in the following activities in 2023: teacher appreciation, with 83 dinners; Canada Day celebrations, 425 meals in the community; Botwood Collegiate, with 200 dinners; Memorial Academy, with 310 meals; and their Christmas drive-thru, with 506 dinners. This brings a total of 3,391 meals throughout the community and the surrounding areas.

Speaker, I would like to ask all Members of the House of Assembly to congratulate the Jubilee Temple Community Cafe and thank them for their service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand in this hon. House today to congratulate chef Kyle Puddester, co-owner and operator of the Fork Restaurant in Mobile.

Kyle was the gold medal winner of Canada's Great Kitchen Party culinary competition held here in St. John's Thursday, October 19. This has not been Kyle's first win of his career.

Born and raised in St. John's, Newfoundland, Kyle began his culinary career when he graduated from the College of the North Atlantic's culinary program in 2008. Since then, Kyle had the opportunity to work in some of the top restaurants in St. John's.

Initially, he lived in Nova Scotia, honing his craft. Kyle and his wife, Kayla O'Brien, opened the Fork Restaurant in Mobile, a small, 28-seat restaurant with a quality over quantity approach, utilizing local-sourced ingredients to produce creative and flavourful dishes.

As the gold medal winner, chef Kyle Puddester represented Newfoundland and Labrador in the Canadian Culinary Championship held February 2 and 3, 2024, in Ottawa where he made new friends and many memories.

Can you please join me in congratulating chef Kyle Puddester on his gold medal win and wishing him the best of luck with his amazing Fork Restaurant.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Hubert Hollett was born in Come by Chance on April 13, 1956. Mr. Hollett, known to most as Hubie, started his career with the Newfoundland Railway at the age of 18 until its closure in 1988.

Hubie had two great loves in life: his family, wife Roxanne, daughters Ashley and Andrea; and hockey. After starting his hockey career in Buchans, Hubie made his home in Badger and his legend as a Bomber began.

He's had great success wherever he played, winning a Herder Memorial Trophy with his beloved Bombers. Hubie was referred to as the CCM, serving as captain, coach and manager.

A crowd favourite in Badger, Hubie devoted his heart and soul to hockey and in the words of my colleague from Ferryland: He was tough as nails. His wife recalls just weeks after their first date, Hubie was walking her home and said: I really like you, just please don't ask me to give up hockey.

Hubert Hollett passed away on February 27 of this year and will be missed throughout the hockey world and his community.

Please join me as we pay tribute to Hubie, a community icon and hockey legend. God bless.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I rise to recognize extraordinary volunteers in the District of Harbour Main. Whether individuals or in community organizations, volunteers are truly our everyday heroes.

For almost 50 years, Joanne Morrissey of North River has been a volunteer and

trailblazer for women's rights which dates back to the early '80s when she marched on Parliament Hill for child care reform. For over 30 years, she organized the International Women's Day event in North River, an annual event celebrating women province wide.

Ron Coombs of Colliers has been a volunteer since he was 16 years old and has an incredible 30 years of service to his community. As a leader on the Collier's Recreation Committee, he has led many great initiatives including building a new recreation building, revitalizing the community playground and ballfield, and leading countless turkey dinners and breakfasts for seniors and children.

Angela Woodford of Harbour Main has over 60 years volunteering and received multiple awards for her volunteer work. Just yesterday in Ottawa, she received the Community Leader Award for all of the Atlantic provinces.

As a volunteer organization, St. Peter's Anglican Church Men's Service Club in Upper Gullies also deserves recognition. In 25 years, they have raised over \$100,000 for charities and their church.

Please join with me in saluting all of these remarkable volunteers.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise and recognize this week, April 14 to 20, as National Volunteer Week here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: National Volunteer Week recognizes and celebrates every volunteer, and their contributions to strengthen inclusivity and well-being in our communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. The theme for National Volunteer Week 2024 is "Every Moment Matters," signifying the importance of every moment that a volunteer gives of their time – and there are many – their skills, their creativity and their empathy to help others.

In a few short weeks as Minister of Housing, I've seen first-hand the incredible, positive impacts that volunteers have across our housing continuum.

The volunteer staff and boards at community centres throughout the province provide supports that foster a deep sense of community, becoming the focal point for community life. Last week, I had the distinct pleasure of visiting Vine Place Community Centre in Corner Brook with my colleague and it was evident how the work of the team there is shaping the community that surrounds them.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize all community partners in the housing and homelessness sector, including the volunteers and boards associated with non-profit community housing projects. The efforts of these volunteers and community agencies are instrumental in helping many individuals overcome barriers and thus transform their lives.

To all the volunteers across every sector in this province, thank you for your dedication to your fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

We, in the Official Opposition, want to take this opportunity to recognize National Volunteer Week and its theme, Every Moment Matters.

Volunteerism promotes a sense of community, builds support systems for those in need fostering a sense of empathy and compassion for others. Volunteers play a crucial role in addressing social and environmental challenges and contribute to the overall well-being of our communities.

As we all know, volunteers take on a lot of responsibility oftentimes with little support. Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting with volunteers at Tent City, who not only advocate for those living there but provide food, everyday necessities and help them navigate government red tape. Many of these volunteers have lived experience, which is important in these situations.

It is crucial for government to not only recognize these volunteers but provide support to all to ensure their efforts and time are valued, sustainable and their lived experience is integrated into the various community initiatives.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement and join him in recognizing Volunteer Week.

We, too, owe a great appreciation for volunteers. I've served on boards and in volunteer organizations and I know the work they do. They step up to cover the gaps left

by government policy, whether its in housing, distributing food hampers or helping out our seniors, they fill in and help the people of our province so that they are much better off.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Today is recognized as equal pay day so on Equal Pay Day I ask the Premier: Why are chemotherapy nurses in rural Newfoundland and Labrador paid less than chemotherapy nurses in St. John's?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we recognize this valuable day for all people across the province. With that particular operational issue, I'm happy to take it back to see why there is a discrepancy. If there is, we'd be happy to take action to try to correct it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, cancer care is a provincial program and there is a discrepancy because chemotherapy nurses in rural Newfoundland and Labrador have reached out to us.

So, again, I ask the Premier: Why is this Liberal government discriminating against rural Newfoundland and Labrador chemotherapy nurses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, if there is a discrepancy, we're happy to take that back and happy to discuss it with the Minister of Health and Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to ensure that those pay equity discrepancies are fixed.

This is the first I'm hearing of it today. Happy to take those concerns back to both the department and to Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to ensure that we are correcting those inequities, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we now learn via access to information that an additional \$40 million was paid out to travel nursing agencies this past year than previously reported.

I ask the Premier: Can you tell the House which companies were paid that money?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are, I think, 10 agencies that are used by the provincial health authority. We can certainly get a list if it wasn't in the access to information. We can get a list of companies that are utilized by the health authority for travel agency nurses in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, for 2023 the total amount paid through travel nursing agencies exceeded over \$100 million.

I ask the Premier: Can you confirm that Canadian Health Labs actually received this full amount in excess of \$100 million?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we'll get the list for the individual. I don't know what was paid to each of the individual agencies, that is something that is dealt with by the health authority, but we'll certainly get the information for the Member and for the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's a significant amount of money that we don't have the record of who we actually paid it out to. I think we need to get that information very quickly.

I ask again: Can the Premier tell this House which company was hired by government to do the vaccination clinics for staff at the Confederation Building?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, that is something that's handled, I believe, by the Public Service Commission to ensure vaccinations to public servants. I am aware, Mr. Speaker, that the company that had been used for a number of years was used again, recently. That is, again, something that's not dealt with or handled by the Department of Health and Community Services, the Premier's Office, Executive

Council, that's through the Public Service Commission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the Nurses' Union had said that their nurses could have provided this service.

So, again, I ask the Premier: Why did you use a private company?

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

T. OSBORNE: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the Member opposite heard my last answer. That company is not somebody that was chosen by anybody on this side of the House or by any department. It was through the Public Service Commission who go out and arrange this. It is something that, when it was brought to my attention, I did indicate to the Registered Nurses' Union that we would look into this. I know my deputy minister has had discussions with the Public Service Commission on this issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, the last time I checked, the Public Service Commission reported to the Minister of Finance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So, again, I ask: How is it possible that a private company is being used when our own nurses were available to do this work?

I ask the Premier: Can the minister provide this House, or the Premier provide this House now, with the report done by the

Comptroller General's investigation into the travel nurses scandal?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the Comptroller General has now, as I understand it, passed files over to the Auditor General, as the Auditor General is now going to be conducting a review of agency nurses and the contracts in this province. The Auditor General will be conducting the full review.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we were told the Comptroller General's office was doing a review and would do a report. The Auditor General has indicated it is going to take some time to do that report.

Can the Comptroller General's investigation be provided to the House of Assembly now?

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

T. OSBORNE: I'm not sure if I'm confused, Mr. Speaker, but Members on the other side were saying the Comptroller General wasn't good enough, that they wanted the Auditor General. Now the Auditor General is doing it, that's not good enough, it should be the Comptroller General. What is it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: We absolutely did call for the Auditor General to get involved in this, but it was the minister who told us that the Comptroller General was doing the investigation, so if there is a report prepared, let's see it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's all I'm asking for.

Speaker, during a review of *Hansard*, we counted the Minister of Health and the number of times he deferred to NL Health Services. It was over 20 times using the words "various operational related matters."

So given that there is \$3.5 billion directly related to money that will be spent by NL Health Services, I ask the Premier: Will you commit to having the CEO of the Health Services board attend the Estimate Committee Friday morning?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, this government is fully committed to transforming health with such a large investment and we continue to make those targeted investments for the people of the province as we transform the health care system from an antiquated system to a new system.

We'll certainly take that back because I am interested in how the money is being spent. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health have both put forward an accountability construct to the health authority to ensure that people are getting value for money, Mr. Speaker. I think that's not an unreasonable suggestion that the Member of the Opposition makes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I thank the Premier for that response because we're concerned as well.

Speaker, we asked the Minister of Health and Community Services on March 6

whether he met with the CEO of Canadian Health Labs. He did not answer my question.

I ask again: Have you ever met with the CEO of Canadian Health Labs? Yes or no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that's an accurate statement because I did indicate that there was a meeting requested, that there was a meeting held. I believe, I, in fact, said that there was some 4.0 or 5.0 plan that they presented. We didn't go with that plan, Mr. Speaker, but they did request a meeting, as do many, many individuals. When a meeting is requested, I do my best to oblige and go to that meeting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the minister clarified because the last time he was asked he never said that. But he is aware we have an ATIPP, I'm sure he knew what was in the ATIPP. The ATIPP clearly stated that he was scheduled to have a meeting with this CHL so he know we had the information.

I'm glad he clarified that because he was misleading the House back on March 6 when he told us he didn't meet. That's not what he said.

Speaker, we now know the Liberal lobbyist involved in negotiations of this lucrative contract because an ATIPP has also disclosed that the former CEO of Central Health forwarded a draft contract from a personal email to a work email and the Liberal lobbyist was copied on that email.

Minister, why were these contracts negotiated through the CEO's personal email?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that the fact that the Member used unparliamentary language will be addressed. Again, we can go back and look at *Hansard* because I did indicate that there was a meeting and there was a 4.0 or 5.0 plan that they proposed that we never, ever entered into, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality.

Why a CEO or why an employee of a health authority or why an employee of everywhere in government would use a private email, Mr. Speaker, that's something you would probably have to ask that employee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, you know, after the biggest cyberattack in Canadian history, we have the minister – the minister is well aware of this, he knew about this. This is not the first time we heard about this. Why he'd stand in this place now and tell us we have to ask someone else – pass the buck again. This should be a big concern to the minister and that government that we don't let this cyberattack happen again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Government contracts being negotiated through personal emails; it's a huge red flag and government should be very concerned about it.

Speaker, we now know that the Liberal lobbyist – who the Premier's office simply forwarded it on – was involved in negotiations, tens of millions of dollars later.

Minister: Can you tell the House was this Liberal lobbyist paid any fees or royalties on these lucrative contracts?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, as the Members opposite know, because I know the leader just spoke a few moments ago and asked questions about why the Comptroller General is not doing a review, the Auditor General is, that is what they wanted. The Auditor General, by the way, is doing a review, a full review, comprehensive review. I'm sure the Auditor General, in that review, will look at these issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Just this one closing remark, Speaker.

The Auditor General publicly stated it's going to take 18 months for her to do a report. You told us, even though we wanted the Auditor General, that you had the Comptroller General doing a report.

If they've passed over information to the Auditor General, why won't you provide that information today to the House and to the people of this province, because this is a pressing issue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Simple question. We want to know how. Why shouldn't the public be told now what the Comptroller General has found. Let the Auditor General take 18 months, Minister. That's our problem, the timelines.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I do believe when we had asked the Comptroller General, that they could do this efficiently and quickly, that was something that they could do, it simply wasn't good enough for the other side.

The reality is the Comptroller General wrote me to indicate that they are no long carrying out a review because the Auditor General is. There is no need for two parallel reviews to be taking place. That is advice that the Comptroller General, through a letter to my office, provided, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is they wanted the Auditor General, they got the Auditor General, now they're not happy again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

We have to get clarity here.

Did the Comptroller General's office do a report? That's what we're looking for. You said they forwarded on documents to the Auditor General. It was going to take 18 months. That's a long time frame.

Did they or didn't the Comptroller General's office do a report? Yes or no.

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To make it abundantly clear to Members on the other side, I did not receive a report from the Comptroller General. I do not believe there was a report done. There wasn't enough time to do a report, Mr. Speaker. The Members on the other side wanted the Auditor General doing this, not the Comptroller General. The Auditor

General is now doing it. Again, they're not happy.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday they asked for Tuesday. On Tuesday they say they wish they had Monday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, *Hansard* will show, this time clearly, and I'm sure I heard it right, that the Comptroller General's office passed over documents to the Auditor General. Full stop.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Will you provide those documents to the public, to the House, that we can see that? Because there are serious concerns here with this contract.

Will you provide those documents? You're talking in circles, Minister. Will you or won't you? Yes or no.

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

As the Comptroller General does report to Treasury Board, and I'm president of Treasury Board, I'm happy to respond to this.

The Comptroller General did indicate there was some preliminary data – very preliminary data. She did write a letter to myself and to Minister Osborne basically indicating that it's of absolute no value to have two offices investigating the same.

I understand the Comptroller General, whatever information they had gathered or preliminary data they might have had, they would give it to the Auditor General, but

they were basically saying it's redundant to have two offices doing the same investigation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and we look forward to the preliminary data coming to the House.

Speaker, the chair of the housing task force was going to have all Tent City residents placed by Christmas. We all know that Santa has not come for those people. Again, for the first time in memory, there are over 3,000 people – Speaker, 3,000 people – on a wait-list for a home.

When is the minister going to start offering keys so these individuals will have a place to call home?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the hon. Member opposite.

We have taken extraordinary steps in our recent budget to address the homeless and homelessness problem in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to cite some of the things, including our announcement yesterday with End Homelessness St. John's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: They're taking over the former site of that hotel at 106 Airport Road. They are bringing in the wraparound supports with Health Services. We are hoping to have people there in short order.

Is it as fast as we'd like it? We want it as quickly as we can. Yes, we agree with the Member opposite that we want to have people in that facility, but we're spending as

well, millions and millions of dollars to create new opportunities for people to build rental housing, to encourage people to buy new houses and build new houses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, we need to remember there are still 21 people at least in Tent City who have no place to call home.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

J. WALL: It is shameful.

Speaker, the first Affordable Rental Housing Program approved by this government for the City of St. John's has been rejected outright. The city rejected the application because it does not have water and sewer and is above the 130-metre contour.

Why is the minister announcing projects that cannot get off the ground?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address the two points that the Member opposite referenced.

Folks who are living right now or staying at the tent encampment are offered, on a daily basis, options, so other places where they can stay within our housing continuum through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, as well as through End Homelessness St. John's who have a team going there every day.

In terms of the situation with the City of St. John's, we conditionally approve a project based on whether or not they would fit our criteria. Then the contractors have to go to the city and the municipalities have to determine whether or not it will fit their – if its infrastructure is the issue, that's what

we'll deal with, then they come back and they have both pieces of the puzzle to go.

We're willing to work with the municipalities and the contractors. If it doesn't work there, we'll hopefully make it work somewhere else, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, as a former municipal leader, it's always important to bring in municipal leaders to the table when provincial government decisions are being made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: That is the problem that was missed here.

Speaker, according to the mayor, the city was never consulted and a councillor has said – and I quote – the provincial government is being disingenuous by approving projects which cannot be approved by the municipality.

Speaker, how many more of the 900 projects announced last November will never see the light of day?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we do not approve zoning projects in this House of Assembly; that's done at a municipal level. What we did was we are creating a field where people can come forward, offer an option to build houses, affordable rental houses, and we will conditionally approve them based on whether or not the municipalities will zone it. That's not our job in this Legislature; it's on a municipal level.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: But we are happy to continue to work with municipalities and, as I said, if it doesn't fit in that spot, perhaps we can find somewhere else where it will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, when you bring the municipal leaders to the table at first, you don't waste an announcement. That's the thing that we're missing here right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Speaker, I think that we know that the Liberals got to 750 new units last year. They were exposed by the media for that number.

Again, if municipalities lack the basic infrastructure to build the units, does the minister expect to get shovels in the ground on quality projects?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we are continually offering options for people to build new, affordable rental properties or homes that other folks can move into through our First-time Homebuyers guide perhaps. There are so many options. I could spend 20 minutes talking about all the things that were in the budget which we outlined just a couple of weeks ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm sure he can talk about them; the problem is there's no action.

Speaker, residents of Labrador are voicing concerns about drug use. They all say the same thing. This government has been warned of RCMP inaction for Labrador for months.

Does your department share the same concerns?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, yes, we're all concerned about any rise in drug use in any community in this province. Unfortunately, the crisis, it's very severe in British Columbia and it's moved across the country here and we see it in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We continue to fund the RCMP and we continue to fund the RNC. In fact, the budget this year hopefully will get the support for the increase of RNC here on the Northeast Avalon as well as in Western Newfoundland. We're constantly talking to the RCMP daily about their resources and how they can be deployed in Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, the minister visited Labrador on November 22 and when he was leaving, he said his head was spinning he was that surprised by it all.

Labradorians have resorted to vigilantism to fight against the ever-growing drug problem. Will the minister join Grand Chief Pokue and the Innu Nation's call for more RCMP to stop the drugs flooding into Labrador?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, it's an ongoing discussion with the RCMP about how they can increase their resources here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Three years ago in the budget, we, for the first time in decades, gave the RCMP a large increase. It was \$17 million and, unfortunately, we still have a vacancy rate of hard and soft vacancies of 20 per cent here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is unacceptable, Speaker. We need to have those positions filled, but funding in RCMP for more positions that can't be filled is not the answer. The RCMP needs to provide members here in Newfoundland and Labrador so they can be in Labrador and fight the drug issues and we continue, constantly, to talk to and engage the RCMP on that very issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Residents of Sheshatshiu say their community is at breaking point for drugs. What is this government doing to urgently address the policing issues in Labrador to curb this growing crisis?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, as I said, I acknowledge that there are drug issues throughout this province. It is being worked on by the Department of Justice and Public Safety and the RCMP and the RNC.

What we are doing here is continue to fund the RCMP, when the members are available, to fund them for a position so they can be allocated appropriately to the serious

areas where they need help. We continue to fund the RNC and increase funding to the RNC in this budget and, of course, we've announced the police transformation team to look at how policing can and should be delivered in a modern Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm very proud of that team. They have done a lot of work already and I look forward to their updates and recommendations as we move forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, on April 11, a VOCM story indicated that a provincial government official had told the radio station about pending DFO charges against John Efford.

VOCM's *Open Line* host, Paddy Daly, expressed disappointment in fairly strong words.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Can the minister explain why his department would try to discredit Mr. Efford?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Do you know what? It amazes me that that Member opposite gets up today and asks that question. Of all the things that are going on, that he could get up and say – a deal has been done in the fishery, the people are working, the fish plant workers are working. I cannot –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: And the FFAW said it's historic. It is historic a deal was done.

I know –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I heard the question; I'd like to hear the response.

Minister, you have 25 seconds.

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

E. LOVELESS: I'll say to the Member for Grand Falls, I will pat myself on the back because I spent many hours – you're always concerned about the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member to address the Chair.

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the protection.

I cannot comment on the question that the Member is asking about a provincial employee. I have no knowledge of that. I don't know why the media reported the way they did. Maybe you should go and ask them the question, not me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, just before the House closed last fall, the minister put the title of the Crown Lands bill on the Order Paper. We have not seen any legislation. In the meantime, government has taken homeowners to court over their own Crown Land issues.

Does this legislation exist?

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

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, in terms of Crown Lands, we all know how important of an issue it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: I can't even hear myself talk.

SPEAKER: Everybody who is shouting back and forth, please take your conversation outside. It's very difficult to hear.

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

E. LOVELESS: I say to the Member for Paradise, it is a good thing, no doubt about it. So a little bit of respect would go a long ways.

In terms of Crown Lands, we know how important it is. I've had conversations with the Member opposite and asking him to bring to me ideas around Crown Lands as well because I know we all want to get it right. Crown Lands has been around for a long time, in terms of the problems that exists in Crown Lands.

We are working towards it. Legislation is being prepared. The Government House Leader did put it on the agenda and it will be coming, no doubt about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: I guess we'll keep – stay tuned. Last year, every time the minister

was asked about Crown Lands, he responded with: stay tuned.

Speaker, we are tuned in with the people of this province. They are suffering under the broken system.

Will the minister finally address the long-standing concerns?

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

E. LOVELESS: Yes, we will.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, while knocking on the doors in Fogo Island - Cape Freels, an issue that was constantly raised was the difficulty navigating the red tape in the Crown Lands system. Residents deserve real answers, Speaker.

When will you cut the red tape in Crown Lands?

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

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak to the individual situation he's talking about but if you want to bring it to me, I certainly will have a look into it and in terms of the –

P. FORSEY: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: And if he's serious about asking the question, he should be serious about listening to the answer that I'm going to give but obviously, it's not. It's just a game to him, just to get up and ask the question.

I say to him, Mr. Speaker, that we are working on it and, internally, in terms of we are building on in terms of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: That's enough shouting back and forth. It's hard to hear the questions; it's hard to hear the answers. I ask all Members, please keep the level of conversation down a bit.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you for that protection, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite is not interested in listening, but I will say that we're continually working on improving things in Crown Lands. I'll say to him, stay tuned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, in March, school administrators and counsellors in Central Newfoundland and Labrador received a letter from Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services asking them to defer sending new consultation requests for children with ADHD, learning disabilities, oppositional defiant behaviour, disruptive behaviour, anxiety, depression and autism due to the heavy backlog of children waiting for assessment in the pediatric clinic.

I ask the Minister of Education: Was she aware of this letter and what immediate steps will she take to address the backlog of children waiting for assessment?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to what is a very significant issue in the Department of Education, something that we've been taking very seriously.

I became aware of the letter that the Member opposite has referenced just a short time ago. In consultation with my colleagues in the Department of Health, we've been taking a look at the situation around the letter and what the circumstances that might have led to this situation may have been and how we can intervene; what it is that we can do to continue to support students in the classrooms who have specific needs; and how we can resource the classrooms appropriately to meet the needs.

The first step in that is often getting the assessment process completed. It's a focus of ours to ensure we have the appropriate resources, appropriate personnel. Then we can provide the appropriate resource for the children in the classrooms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I heard that they're looking into it, but no action.

Speaker, this is yet another example of how this government is failing children and families in our province by its inaction to address the crises facing our schools and the health care system.

I ask the Minister of Health: What human resources will he put in place to ensure that the pediatric clinic can clear up the backlog in a timely manner and get our children the help they need?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important issue. As my colleague, the Minister of Education, has responded in the last question, the departments are working together to look at resources to ensure that children with needs have the services that they require. That will take time, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that those resources are put in place, to look at what resources are needed. But that work is ongoing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: They've been looking at these problems since they've been in. Tired of what they're looking at.

Speaker, I ask the Minister of Education what human resources will she put in place to support families and school communities in Central Newfoundland now unable to send students for assessment, what human resources?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, a very important issue. As I've referenced before, this is not an issue that we can simply throw a number at and say that a resource is available and that there will be somebody there tomorrow. Because if that's the case, then I'd be accused of just putting somebody in place for the sake of having it accomplished without really realizing what the method is of trying to establish a resource in a community.

So we'll continue to work with the Department of Health to see what resources are needed, to determine what actual

personnel are required and who can provide the most effective service in that time frame.

In the meantime, we continue to provide resources to our schools through itinerant teachers, through teachers who have special training in meeting the needs of these children in our classrooms and we'll continue to do that on a case-by-case basis as this information comes forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Inaction is the watchword here.

Speaker, I ask the Premier: Will he concede the first and most important step in reimagining the education system to ensure students and learners at all levels receive the educational service they need in the classroom is not to strike yet another committee, but to address class size and composition and the human resources deficit in our schools?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I am glad to have the opportunity to respond to that question because earlier this year we had the opportunity to have a Think Tank with our teachers and class composition was one of the top issues that was identified as one of the challenges being present in our classrooms today. So, we were able to look at that to provide some immediate relief for that situation.

We introduced additional student assistant hours and in *Budget 2024* we were able to build on that commitment, allocating \$3 million, which turns out to be about 104 student assistants who will be in place. They'll be able to support our classrooms, to be able to address some of the issues that

arise when we look at classroom compositions.

As we continue to work with our partners at the NLTA to investigate what the best method moving forward would be to determine classroom teacher allocations, those will be issues that are top of mind.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Time for Question Period has expired.

Before I move forward, during Oral Questions, the Opposition House Leader did use unparliamentary language when he said the minister is misleading the House.

I ask the Member to retract his comments.

B. PETTEN: Sorry for using misleading the House, Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state that there's no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Various forms of child abuse often co-occur and are highly interrelated. Treating child sexual abuse differently from non-sexual child abuse for limitation period purposes is inconsistent with the shift in society's awareness and understanding of the damaging effects of child maltreatment.

Victims of child abuse may take many years to process, to come to terms with their trauma and find the courage to report.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures that those responsible for heinous acts can be held accountable, regardless of how much time has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice, ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland and Labrador's approach to child abuse claims in line with human rights standards and the revised statutes of most other provinces.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitations periods for civil child abuse claims.

Speaker, this issue is, at the core, related to understanding the damaging effects of child abuse. It's about understanding trauma. It's about understanding what victims of child abuse have to endure and the fact that it may take years to come to terms with trauma and understanding the level of courage that it takes to report this abuse.

That is what this petition is about. But it's about the law, it's about the law that we have right now. Our justice system and our law is not providing the access to justice that is necessary. It is an opportunity for our Minister of Justice and Public Safety to come forward and increase that access to justice for these individuals who are facing barriers, who are facing roadblocks. It's about encouraging and empowering people

who have been abused to have that courage to report the abuse that they've suffered. It's about having a law that protects our vulnerable people, the children who have been physically abused.

We know that as the law stands now, it's inconsistent with most other jurisdictions in our country. In fact, all of the provinces, except one and Newfoundland, have removed these time limits.

This physical abuse should not have a time limit. We're urging the government to remove this timeline because it's the right thing to do.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll read the petition:

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor (a) within an intimate relationship (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim – i.e., the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred, that it was caused by or contributed by an act or omission, or that the act or omission was that of the defendant; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a

means of remedying the injury, loss, or damage.

I stand again on this petition, as with other people in this Legislature, to go through that. We had a lot of debate on this in the House and everybody presenting petitions and discussing this. This is a government. I know we're looking at the Minister of Justice and say change it; this is the Premier's decision. I know how the Cabinet works. If the Premier wants something, it's going to be done.

I understand the minister, I understand your position in this here, from the Department of Justice, but there has to be a way. If eight other provinces could do it, why can't Newfoundland? We stand on a regular basis and say, oh, we're following the lead of others. Well, look at other provinces. Here's an opportunity to say, let's look at other provinces and let's follow their lead.

For eight of the 10 provinces and territories, to change the *Limitations Act*, there had to be a valid reason to do it – had to be. So why don't we follow their lead? Why don't we come up with some kind of plan that we always say, let's do a review of all the other provinces – let's do it and we can find out if it should be done.

I don't want to speak on it, but when this comes up, just think about this now, in this case it would Jack Whalen. He has to come back here and go through what you call discovery. He has to sit down and answer all the questions. He has to sit down, again, in front of a bunch of lawyers and answer all the questions. When did you know? How did you find out? When did you find out about the limitations? Why didn't you bring up – he got to do all that and here we are, sitting down as legislators, and letting a man who has been abused to do that. It is shameful. We should change it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state that there is no limitation period for claims involving child abuse of any form.

Various forms of child abuse often co-occur and are highly interrelated. Treating child sexual abuse differently from non-sexual child abuse for limitation purposes is inconsistent with the shift in society's awareness and understanding of the damaging effect of child maltreatment.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures those responsible for heinous acts are held accountable, regardless of how much time has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice and ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland's approach to child abuse claims in line with human rights standards and revised statutes in most other provinces.

Speaker, I said in the House of Assembly, several times, that this petition, basically, applies to everyone. I also want to point out the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands who have championed this petition. Actually, we owe them a debt of gratitude for bringing this forward time after time. I've stood up and I've presented it as well, but they've been the champions.

In actual fact, the real champion that's looking after children, future abuses and also people who have been abused as children in the past is a person who is here in the House of Assembly today, Jack Whalen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker I don't know how much time I have left because I only have three minutes to present this petition but last time I ended my petition, before my time was cut off, by saying children are not always born into a place where they can be protected, not into a family or into a community that looks after the little children but worse, Speaker, is when they end up in some form of care where there are adults who are in a position of authority and they have no one to look after them and they're harmed, tortured.

I got to say, when you're looking at this, who in their right mind would say that some child who spent 730 days in a small cell in solitary confinement is not a form of torture?

Speaker, one point I want to make is there is a difference. We removed the limitations for children who've been sexually abused, but in actual fact when you look at abuse, whether it's sexual abuse or whether it's torture –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run any time a defendant willfully conceals or misleads the claimant and essential elements of the claim, or willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss, or damage.

The above-mentioned legislative changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry and previous limitation period.

Now, this is the third one in a row on this issue. I want to add my voice to this again on behalf of not just Mr. Whalen, but anybody else who has experienced this and, God forbid, anyone in the future who might experience this.

It's important to note here, as my colleague from Torngat Mountains noted, this is not about a child being abused by a sibling or a parent or whatever in a home setting. That's really not what this is about. What Mr. Whalen is talking about here, what happened to him, these are children who are in the custody of the government. This happened in the boys' home or remand centre, or whatever you want to call it at the time, where there were judges involved and there were counsellors involved that were supposed to be looking after these children.

So, to my mind, this really does equate very much to Mount Cashel. It equates to what happened in residential schools. It's the same concept of what we're talking about here. It's amazing that if there had of been a sexual element to this, there would not be an issue. But it's okay, somehow under our laws right now, if it was sexual, sure, you can have justice; but someone could literally beat a child to a pulp, they could torture a child – that's what they could do. They could torture or beat a child, the psychological abuse and everything else and we're just going to ignore that and say, well, there was no sexual element, so nothing we can do, b'y. That's what we're saying.

But almost every other province has said there is something we can do. With the exception of New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador, all other provinces are allowing people in this situation to have justice.

But for some reason, which is beyond me, and given what happened here in this

province with residential schools, given what happened in this province with Mount Cashel and clergy abuse in general and all that stuff, my God, you would think that we would have learned.

We should be ashamed of what happened. We should make sure and commit that nothing like that could ever happen again. We have an opportunity in this House of Assembly to do something about it.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: We are into a budget debate right now.

The hon. Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I very much look forward to some comments and some suggestions on the budget and I know that there are people tuned in from home that I just want to recognize today before I commence.

We talked about the fishery, and watching today from a street with a very unique name in the District of Bonavista, within Bonavista, from Bake Pot Pond Road, is a lady by the name of Phyllis Cuff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Phyllis is watching with her nephew, Tony, today looking at the budget and tuned into the House of Assembly to find out what is being discussed and if the people who are looking at the affairs of the province are addressing them in the House.

So I want to say hello to Phyllis, who has spent her career working at the plant in Bonavista and has been retired now for some 25-plus years. So hello to Phyllis and Tony from Bake Pot Pond Road in Bonavista.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, on VPCM, the host of the morning show on VPCM had interviewed the newest Member of the House of Assembly and asked what Mr. Jim McKenna had heard at the doors. I just noted what he had stated he had heard at the doors. He said government needs to get in touch, is what he had heard. He also said that the people are not happy with government policies and practices.

And I'd like to add one more word to government policies and practices, I'd like to use the word, or enter the word "operational." It is a theme that, in my speaking time that I've got, I'll use the word "operational" and I'd also like to include some suggestions going forward, of which the government, in their policies, in their practices, in their operations, ought to be using or can use.

We know that, whether it be Phyllis Cuff and Tony Cuff in Bonavista and the residents in the Districts of Bonavista and those in the province, we know a lot of the issues that they have, currently. We know that health care is an issue. We know that cost of living is an issue. We know poverty reduction is an issue. We know that the fishery is an issue. My hon. Member for Exploits who raises Crown lands, which is an issue. So we have a myriad of issues.

When the government Members and ministers stand in their place and say: Here's what we do. The question would be for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador: Is life better since 2015? I guess that's the question for the population. Is life better for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador? And that's what we debate in the House. Our job is to challenge government on what they do or things they don't do and that is often the crux of the debate.

We've often said that we don't have a plan. We are super glad that the fishery is back and operating again. We're all glad. We're super happy that it's back and in operation, but we must keep in mind why they were here. The question I had asked today was the group that was led by Mr. John Efford, he came here, in fact, because there was inaction and failure of the government to deal with provincial fishery mattress. It happened last year. It happened this year. That's why they were here. So, yes, some matters were resolved, but there is so much work left to be done with the fishery. I think we need to be proactive, not reactive. That's

where we are. That's what we always say. Let's be proactive and not reactive.

The Member from Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned yesterday, he had talked about health care and he had mentioned that there were two recent graduates on the Mainland who weren't offered positions in Newfoundland and Labrador. He stated that was the case. We hear that from time to time. We hear it with nurses, that they're not offered a permanent position. I would say when it comes down to it, when we look at wait times, when we look at lack of space issues, when we look at substandard equipment that our health care system is currently using, these are operational issues.

I would contend, as the Member for the District of Bonavista, with, at least Tony and Phyllis as my witnesses, I would say we've got many crises in this population. We acknowledge health care is broken. We have a cost-of-living crisis. We have one quarter of our children who live in food-insecure homes. We have a fishery, which just started, and two years in a row protested for a better system before they hit the water. We all know that Crown lands is beyond broken.

Let me add one more. This may be the biggest of all that I'd like to discuss in my remaining time. We have an operational crisis. If all of those factors we agree that we've got a problem and we've got a crisis, who is in charge to make sure that they deliver the products and the programs to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador? It is the current government.

If we have crisis upon crisis, that is the evidence that the government would need to look at to find out that what they're doing is not working and we ought to be trying something different. That is the challenge that we present to the government.

I'm going to throw out some suggestions in a short time, because I don't want to stand

up here and say I'm without suggestions. At least I'll throw some out to you.

I went to visit an individual who was having open-heart surgery – and don't mistake my words as a health care crisis and I've stated, and we all agree in this House, of the professionalism and the skill set of those who work our health care system is great.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: That is something, I think, that we can all join in to say it is great.

But when I went in to visit the lady who was two days away from open-heart surgery, then the nurse wheeled in the blood pressure device. As she was attaching it on, the monitor of which was on the top was falling down and she couldn't – with two hands, she put it on, but the monitor would keep falling down. She made the comment that we don't have equipment that's in good shape to deliver the health care.

Not knowing who I was or what my position was within the House, she showed me an area where it was cordoned off, where they had all the broken equipment that was in the floor. That was the Health Sciences complex. I hear it in the Bonavista hospital. I hear it in G. B. Cross in Clarenville. That is an operational issue.

We had questions in the House of Assembly on March 11. We raised several issues, and the issues that were raised – I'm not going to use my time up on that – but the Minister of Health and Community Services had mentioned many times, as Minister of Health and Community Services, that these issues were operational. Do you want the cellphone number of the CEO? Because that's not my responsibility. My responsibility was policy.

But he also said, in the answer in *Hansard*, that his responsibility was oversight. So if we look at issues within the health care system, that we find that would put it into a

crisis, the extraordinary amount that was given to travel nurses, the items that were paid for in large, millions of dollars that ought not to have been, his job is oversight. That is his job, is oversight. He is the minister.

I've heard that before said, well, the buck stops with the minister. I believe it ought to – I believe it ought to, but between March 11 and March 12, the minister had used, to put it on to the health authority, no less than seven times that it was an operational issue. That means not his, but it was.

Remember the excessive number of dead bodies, unfortunately, who were being held next to the dumpster at the Health Sciences complex? That was an operational issue. That was being dealt with by the health authority, or by CSSD. Whatever he had stated at that time, but wasn't his issue. But if his job is oversight, it is his issue.

Let me go on to present a couple of suggestions. I said in my preamble that one out of four children in Newfoundland and Labrador live in food-insecure homes. That's shocking. That's really hurtful and I think for those children out there that would be living in those homes, that's terrible. A suggestion I presented last year in the House – and I just want to summarize it, which I don't want to waste my time on it. I mentioned for child support enforcement.

Just to give you a figure; we have 4,922 active files in this division. There are eight enforcement officers who do a great job. No critique on them; they do a great job. That would give them 615 files each. But here's the kicker: Where child support single parents are out there, in Newfoundland and Labrador the approximate number of households in Newfoundland and Labrador with child support is 4,482.

When I presented my petition, I stated about a young mom with a child was receiving child support. The first of the month when her rent was due with that young child, the

support payment that that mom got was \$27. Not the \$600-plus was owing her, because it came in in trickles in small amounts over the month. I would say to you that may not be an affordability issue, but that put that young mom and that young child or more in a very precarious and tough spot.

My suggestion at that time, the money is coming in; why doesn't government send that money support on the first of the month to that young mom and child who's probably in a food-insecure home, knowing that that money is coming back in to replenish the coffers? All within one month it could be balanced off, but that young mother, with a child or more, do not have to wait the rest of the month to receive her payment. Only a matter of an operational issue for government to make it happen. We're not saying pay more. When that money comes in, that lady will have it, but government will be repaid in that month that the money comes in.

Four thousand, four hundred and eighty-two households receive income support and we're saying one of four children live in an insecure home. I would think that's a decent suggestion for government. Have they acted on it since they heard it last year? No.

We have no Poverty Reduction Plan. I just want to go a minute on that. We stated and the minister boasted and said that we increased the Child Benefit by 300 per cent, and that is a good thing. But what is transparent in that is that, in Canada, we have the lowest threshold that exists. If you're above it, you get reduced payments. So that threshold, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, is \$17,397. You make more than that, you get your benefits reduced.

I would say to you, a mother or parents, a family with children, if they're below \$17,000, I would say we're talking to a rather small group of individuals that we service. Thresholds are very important, and

what the Premier didn't say in the poverty reduction announcement, he should have said 300 per cent, we're tripling the benefit, but we're going to keep the threshold at \$17,397, the lowest in Canada. That is disingenuous.

I would say, raise the threshold so that we can get more food in those insecure homes and then the Child Benefit is going to be far more successful.

This one – I presented this petition last year. We said that we have seniors who are struggling. They struggle in Fogo Island - Cape Freels. They struggle in Ferryland. They struggle in Exploits. Labrador West, in government districts of which are represented by government Members.

The federal government, when they contribute to seniors through the Income Supplement, their contribution is indexed. So we know when they raise 2 per cent, 3 per cent a year, as they go up and the federal government pays more, using the formula online, what happens? The provincial government will pay a less amount because they're making more money and, therefore, the provincial government will give less. Because in the provincial government formula, it is the same as what it was back in '15, '16, not indexed and that's where it is. Federal government pays more; provincial government pays less the amount.

I would say: Would that help seniors? I would say that is a suggestion that ought to be looked into, but that was presented last year. Was that acted upon? It was not.

I presented a petition last year when it came down to – and we know we had a fatality that was directly linked to the hospital doors in Bonavista being locked. Imagine, we have an emergency department in Bonavista, that when the ambulance is called and they're rushed to the emergency, imagine the thought that you go to the Bonavista hospital and the doors are

locked. You can't get in to emergency. It happened lots last year. It happened just recently.

When I raised that petition, the response back from the minister was that they were going to look into it. It's an operational issue. Is it fixed? It happened last week. Someone in need of an emergency went to the doors, some health care professionals inside – we know that we've got virtual links, but the doors were locked. They were directed straight up, and they only triaging that could happen was from the medical attendants, which are wonderful, in the ambulance. They couldn't get access to diagnostics or anything in the hospital. I would say, that was presented last year but it is not addressed as a suggestion.

I mentioned last year the drivers' road test. They moved it to Clarendville. Before, they would send a driver inspector down to Bonavista and when they had a full day, they can spend down there to have people drive around in areas that they're familiar with, then it made good sense.

What we do more often than not in rural Newfoundland, whether it be health care, your driver's licence, anything to do – you've got to travel further for it to happen and that's what we are facing in rural Newfoundland. We'll find there is an erosion of services in lots of cases in rather large centres in rural Newfoundland and it becomes very expensive.

I would say to end, Mr. Speaker, those were some suggestions that we threw out. I had a few more but probably I will get another chance for a speaking engagement in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I'll stand and have my few words on the budget and the issues concerning the Humber - Bay of Islands to Corner Brook area. I thank the great people of Humber - Bay of Islands for their continued support and, please God, if I run again, that I'll still have that same support.

Before I get into my few words about the issues, I listen a lot and I take a few notes. My colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, was speaking yesterday and he said he wasn't in this House for the budget and he just picked up some of the things.

The Minister of TI, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, said: Well, you should have been here. It's your job.

J. ABBOTT: I still do think it.

E. JOYCE: Let me finish now.

What happened two days prior, when there were protestors here and you're over there clapping like seals because we closed the House for two days – we closed the House for two days. No debate for two days and, all of sudden, because we wouldn't walk across the picket line, you're saying: You should have been here.

How many of you guys were here Monday night with your pyjamas on, up having popcorn and tea? You didn't even have to cross the picket line on Tuesday and you want to criticize this Member for not being here when you're over there clapping like that, like a little seal, saying you wanted the House closed and sitting up there on a Monday, coming in with his pyjamas on with his pillow, eating popcorn and tea, didn't even have to cross the picket line and saying that he should have.

That's all I'll say about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: That's all I will say about that. Let everybody judge how they want to. There are different circumstances.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: You'll have your chance to speak. You'll have your chance to speak.

I'll just say to the Member for Mount Pearl, I'm glad that I stood with you and not put ourselves in danger of it. I'm glad. But I did read the budget and I'll go through some items that I got a concern about.

Mr. Speaker, I know this is a big issue, the radiation oncologist for Corner Brook. I know it's a big issue. They had four to five years to try to get it straightened up. I urged the government, and I know that there's a shortage across Canada. There's no doubt about that, there's a shortage, but when there's a shortage, you have to find other ways to entice them. If it's extra money, if it's extra benefits, something that we have to get done for the hospital in Corner Brook. That was the big thing that people are so happy about, was the radiation therapy for Corner Brook and for all Western Newfoundland. That was a big issue.

I know it's an issue that a lot of people are asking a lot of questions about. I raised the questions here in the House to the minister last session. We're anticipating that it's going to have one there in place. Now we know there's no one in place. The recruitment agencies can't find anyone to come to Corner Brook for that.

We know now that locums are not possible, we know that now. We know now that you need one on-site. The head of the cancer in St. John's, in a CBC Radio interview said: No, you have to have someone on-site because something may go wrong and we need the specialist here to solve it.

So, again, I'm raising this issue because back when we pushed for the new hospital in Corner Brook and the issue came up

about radiation in the Corner Brook area, that was the biggest concern we had was they were going to build a new hospital with so many people travelling to St. John's, to help take the pressure off St. John's, if we had one in Corner Brook, it would take the pressure off and save a lot of trouble for people to have to travel to St. John's, away from their loved ones, going through this dreaded disease. Having this radiation in St. John's, you're not feeling well. You feel down. You want to have family around. You want to be home to make you more comfortable and that's why it was done.

I go back in 2012, I guess, 2013, when we started doing the review of it while we were in Opposition. We did the study, we contacted a lot of people throughout, Dr. David Saltman out on Vancouver Island.

Now, we have the machine – and I have to mention Mr. Tom Marshall was involved with it also to help with that. I have to mention that because he was a big proponent, but he was hamstrung until he became Premier and then he stepped up and did the \$500,000 study. I have to mention that.

Then when we formed the government in 2015, we did announce the new hospital. The whole Liberal government announced the new hospital in Corner Brook with radiation. I won't get into the other things that were taken out. The big thing is the radiation. I hear it a lot that this is the biggest concern about the new hospital, the lack of radiation therapy.

I urge the minister, I don't know the ins and outs, I don't know what else you can do. I understand the issue across Canada, but the government did have five years to have this in place. I don't know if we need to increase the compensation for the Corner Brook area, I don't know because I'm not privy to discussions, I'm not privy to the recruitment agencies of what they're doing. I just urge the minister and I urge the government to do what you can do to get

this, because it's going to save a lot of lives for people in Western Newfoundland and it's going to make life a lot better for people who are going through this dreaded disease.

That's my plea to government now. I'm sure there's always a way. I always remember the statement Jean Chrétien used to say: Ministers take care of difficult things; prime ministers take care of impossible things. It's a way for the Premier to use his influence some way also, if there's any way possible, because this is too big of an issue that we can't find and get addressed for the people in Western Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just wanted to bring that up and have the time to talk about that. I'm just glad it's there. We just have to get it up and running.

Another thing I'm going to bring up, Mr. Speaker, is the roads planning and the road money. Back, I would say, a few years ago, I put an access to information in about the priorities. You can't get it anymore.

I'll just explain to the people what's happening. The engineers in the department would go out. They would do a review of all the roads and they would rank them. They would take the ranking system, do it up, then they do it per region and send it in to government. Then government would go from the rankings, if it's a safety issue, a concern, and then would go with the projects, come on down, you can see what the rankings were. There may be some close and you say which one do you pick? That's fine.

But now you can't get the ranking systems. You can't get it. Do you know why? All decisions are made in Cabinet. It's a Cabinet document now. The ranking systems that we used to get for roads in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, you can't get it anymore. You can't get it. Who makes the final decision? The Premier because it's a Cabinet document. You will never –

P. LANE: Sounds like what the Privacy Commissioner was talking about.

E. JOYCE: That's what the Privacy Commissioner was talking about. You can say either: we got to get a legal opinion or it's a Cabinet. So it's gone to Cabinet now.

I'll just give you an example. The Member for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, I'm just going to read a statement that was reported by CBC. He was asked the question about roads. "When I'm your MHA, I will be able to pick up the phone and call the transportation minister and say, 'These roads ... need to be done in this year's budget,' and they will be done," the Member said, and that's true.

That's the sad part about that, it's true. It's actually true that you can walk into Cabinet, which he was privy to because he knew what was happening in Cabinet, he was part of the Cabinet. He was the Premier's right-hand man. He was there, seen it done. Let's divvy this up.

Then the Member made the statement that he would walk into the minister and say: We want it done. Forget the ranking, forget the priority, forget any priority in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, let's get it done because it's making me look bad. That's what that government has come down to.

That's the sad part. It's true. What that Member for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's said is true, and no one can ever see the ranking anymore, so no one knows what the priorities are around the province. It's only the Premier who makes a final decision.

I'll tell you what's appalling.

P. LANE: So the district got to be white in order to get pavement.

E. JOYCE: Got to be white, yeah.

I'll tell you what's appalling, when I got the information on it and I went through, because I think it was \$400,000 for the Humber - Bay of Islands, I think it was, so I put in the list of projects that were done, and you don't come with the rankings now, you get a list of projects that were done.

The budget, I think, that year was \$60 million. I'm not sure exactly what it was. The Premier's district, excluding the park, because that's federal, from the park, one end to the other, that's federal, the Premier got \$30 million in one year – one year, and you can't get the rankings to see if it was a priority or how safe or unsafe.

There are roads that are approved here, I have it right here. People who drive Route 450 from Lark Harbour up, there is more traffic there in one day than a few of those roads gets in a month – a month, but you can't have the Premier because he makes the decision in Cabinet. It's factual. It's factual. It's coming right from the department. That's what we come to.

Forget safety: There is a place out there, and the minister is aware of it because he met with – and I thank him for that – the two mayors of York Harbour and Lark Harbour. There is a place there with gabion baskets, number four brook. They were about eight feet high. They're about 2½ feet now. When there's a lot of rain, they put a tractor there to clear the rocks off the road. Someone is going to get hurt; I've been saying it for years.

Lark Harbour was supposed to get water and sewer. The previous minister said, yeah, we'll get something: nothing. Supposed to get some roads for Bottle Cove: nothing. All because it is in an independent district. It's sad. It is actually sad that you won't do the safety concerns.

When it was put in this year, and I wrote the minister, I wrote him a very stern letter, I must say, about safety concerns, a very stern letter. I won't say who replied back to

me. The reply – if anybody in this House who has been around, drove this province a lot in Labrador, would realize that it's not only laughable because it is so serious, but it is almost like you take it and push it aside because they're saying: Oh, here we go again.

What I was told, in an email – I won't say who the person was, I guess trying to protect the minister – is that it is put in for the slope. I said: Okay, how much is it done? Thank you very much, that's good news. Oh, we got to do the design work first. I shook my head and I wrote back, I said: The design work for gabion baskets? There are hundreds, if not thousands, across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Now they're saying: Oh, we'll just going to do the design work to do that gabion baskets. And I said to myself, what a ploy.

So they could stand up and say: Yes, we're doing something. Yes, we're looking at that, but we're going to do a design. Someone is going to get hurt, mark my words – mark my words. There are cars running over rocks. There are damaged cars. Someone is going to get hurt.

The ones further in from York Harbour, they're still about eight feet tall when they were put there. But where the bank is so – and the minister's deputy said he's aware of it, he drove there and he seen it. It is a steep slope; a lot of rocks come down and they're going right on the road and tractors are moving them off the road. This is the reality. I know Route 440, there are major concerns there also.

Then when I got this year, the funding for the Humber - Bay of Islands, one is the bridge in Hughes Brook, announced in 2019, ongoing for four years, almost done – not almost done, they had to stop it because they ran into an artesian well and they couldn't put the rock down. That was three years ago.

The other one they put in from Humber - Bay of Islands is the overpass coming down Lewin Parkway, which half is in the Corner Brook District and the other half is in Humber - Bay of Islands. Put it down, we're finishing the work. They couldn't get the supplies for the last two years. There were some gables that they needed. That's all it was, but it's in there as a big project.

The other one they put in is around Pinchgut Lake going towards St. George's, not even in the Bay of Islands District, not even in there. So they had to put it in to say, look what we did. But you can't get the priority list. You can't get it. What is done now – it is shameful.

If anybody ever wants to know why you feel that the government is not doing their job right, is when you know you have safety concerns, the minister knows there are safety concerns, previous ministers knew there were safety concerns; but the decision is made in Cabinet, and the person who's in control of the Cabinet is the Premier, the Premier of this province is making the decision, do not fix those safety concerns, I want the money for my district, is shameful. It's actually shameful, and I'm serious on that.

I know when I spoke to the previous minister, this minister, it's not that you want luxuries on the road. It's not that. You want safety concerns. Letter after letter after letter from the councils and you think that the people are going to say okay, you better not vote for the Member Eddie Joyce anymore if you want a bit of road. Do you think the people are going to be bribed like that?

The question is: Do you think the people are going to be bribed? The bigger question is: As a responsible government, should you be putting people in that position or the MHA in that position? That's the bigger question. This is so serious and the minister is well aware of it. I would say they had 25, 30 letters. Not just from me, from town

councils, residents, other things, ditching in the area, talking about the flooding. Be prepared – be prepared. Don't even clean out the ditches anymore. Haven't been one done down in the area for years because, oh, we have to make sure the Premier is happy.

Okay, who else over there might be in a bit of trouble, politically? When the member from Portugal Cove-St. Philip's made that statement that was reported in the media, when he got it –

P. LANE: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Oh yeah, they got \$18 million, total.

Mr. Speaker, the funny thing about it – it's not funny. When you go through the budget – and I read the budget – there's going to be three new health care teams: one in St. John's; coincidentally, one is going to be in Baie Verte, by-election coming up; the second one is going to be in Springdale, by-election coming up. I mean, read the budget. Read it. I'm not saying this. This is factual. This is actually factual.

What I'm saying to the government – and I'll have a lot more time to speak about nurse practitioners, the wait time in the hospitals and other things, but this is so serious about safety. I mean, for the Premier of the Province to get this in front of Cabinet and know there are safety concerns and just not do it and spend \$30 million in his own district. If you go through what was spent in his district this year is another millions and millions and millions of dollars – millions – \$30 million in one year, excluding the park. Then you look at people around me here, people presenting petitions here about trying to get a bit of work done so the cars aren't damaged and trying to get access.

So I urge the government, if you do the right thing, people will support you – people will support you. But if you're not doing the right thing, people will know you are not doing

the right thing and you lose support. When you don't do the safety issues and you don't promote the safety issues in the areas, then people are going to start talking, media is going to take it over.

The safety concerns, Mr. Speaker, is something that you should not have to be standing in this House of Assembly and trying to urge the government to get it done. You shouldn't have to do it. The reason why it's being done is because you can never see the priority list that was ever sent in. You can never see it. You can't see it anymore.

I was listening to the budget – actually the minister. The budget was \$50 million over five years for capital works. That's what you stated was in the budget – five years, \$50 million. I'll show it to you. It's what you said in the budget for capital works.

How many people in this Assembly know that there's no federal-provincial agreement for water and sewer this year? None. No provincial. The \$10 million that they're using for the water and sewer is what was used for capital works for fire halls, town halls and now it's taken and put into water and sewer. That's it. There are no other funds for it.

I'll have my opportunity again to speak, and I hope the safety concerns are going to be addressed because I'll keep speaking about the safety concerns.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the budget. I'm always honoured to stand here on behalf of the constituents of the

District of Harbour Main and also in my portfolio as shadow minister for Seniors.

In that regard, I'll focus my remarks primarily in this debate about the impact that the budget has with respect to seniors, as well as going forward what I think is necessary to address some of the serious issues that our seniors are facing.

Speaker, there's no doubt that caring for our seniors is a moral obligation. It's a moral obligation that the government bears on behalf of the society these seniors have spent a lifetime building. When I look at the condition and the experience that our seniors in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador have to face, it's very disheartening. We live in a prosperous country and when I look at, for example, the Seniors' Advocate's report, it is very concerning what we have learned.

One of the things that the Seniors' Advocate has advanced in her very comprehensive reports, I might add, is in terms of putting money back in the pockets of our seniors. I would argue that that is where the government has failed with respect to this budget.

Now, one of the things I do not want to do though – and I think that we, in the Opposition, often have been criticized and I feel that that – even at a function this morning, when I met with some individuals and we were talking about the Opposition's role and our role in terms of holding government's feet to the fire and holding them accountable. I also heard that what needs to be done is also recognizing the positives that our government has done, because otherwise when we don't do that, we really lose credibility as an entire institution, I suppose because it just resorts or becomes partisan politics. I don't think that's something that we, in the Opposition, believe in and it is not something that is how we want to present.

The first thing I'm going to say – and the Finance Minister has referenced the Seniors' Well-Being Plan and the initiatives that were made in that regard. They need to be acknowledged as being positive. I do want to point out that, yes, there are additional benefits that are going to come to low-income seniors living at home to support services, such as snow clearing and grocery delivery. That's important and that is a good initiative.

We, in the Official Opposition, do not deny that; we acknowledge that. We also see the importance of the initiative with respect to a caregiver benefit. That's going to provide financial assistance to clients who have higher care needs and it's going to hopefully provide them the supports they need to live at home longer. As well, with respect to an initiative with seniors living in Coastal Labrador communities, there's a new supplement for food and heating, which is also introduced as part of the plan.

That has to be acknowledged. Credit has to be given where credit is due. I think that that is an important thing to point out. But I also have to, in addition to the positive, acknowledge the weaknesses and the gaps that exist. When we've heard from the Seniors' Advocate who has done extensive reports. Her golden years report back last year asked what are the golden years and was the government putting and keeping money back in the pockets of seniors? That's what we need to see happening.

Unfortunately, we see that there have been initiatives, but the criticism and the gap there is the lack of real plan or strategy. People and seniors and advocates that advocate for seniors, such as the Seniors' Advocate, they want to see actual plans and strategies, not just these ad hoc initiatives. Okay, we'll throw this money here for a caregiver benefit, or a seniors' care grant.

Now, I'm sure the response that will come back from the Minister of Finance is, well, we have a Poverty Reduction Plan that was

put in place last year. But from what I've heard and my discussions with seniors – I've also had the opportunity to meet with the Seniors' Advocate on a couple of occasions, and although she acknowledges the positives as well, we know that our seniors are still struggling to survive, and we know that this is not getting any better.

The concern that I see, as the critic, is that this Poverty Reduction Plan really lacks the detail. It does not have that comprehensive, targeted focus and detail as to how it's going to put money back in the hands of our seniors.

So, unfortunately, I think the government often tries to paint this rosy picture of what it's like for a senior, but I know that I, in the District of Harbour Main, hear from my senior constituents, as do our Members in the Official Opposition and I'm sure on the government side, and that is not a reality. It's not a rosy picture.

I've heard from individuals today who said, just tell us the way it is. Don't try to paint a rosy picture. That is disingenuous and it only infuriates the people more than anything. You know, tell us the good, bad and the ugly and we can take it, we know, but trying to present something that's not reality is what is very frustrating and really paints all of us in a very bad light as Members in the House of Assembly.

We do know that seniors, perhaps of all of us, are suffering the most. Look around you. It is the reality. When we look at some of the initiatives, for example, that the Seniors' Advocate – recommendations she made, prebudget announcements, and she made quite a few actually. I will continue to ask these questions going forward because there were many – there were approximately 11 prebudget recommendations of the Seniors' Advocate.

But did the budget address these recommendations? I would submit to you that they were essentially ignored, and I will

be speaking to those as we go forward in debate over this important issue.

It leaves one to wonder if the government is not listening to the Seniors' Advocate in terms of those prebudget announcements. That is really the problem here. When you're not listening, when you're not considering the views of not only the Seniors' Advocate, but the people that she represents.

I might add, when we look back on the report that she did, it was an incredibly comprehensive and effective measurement of how our seniors in the province feel. The response by seniors was incredible. There was huge uptake in terms of the seniors getting back and expressing what their views were, yet we don't see government, in my view, listening to some of these concerns.

I feel that this budget was a missed opportunity to address the glaring gaps that exist. Yes, as I pointed out, the Seniors' Well-Being Plan, there are some good things there, but it's not enough and it's not a plan. They call it a plan, but it's just a small piecemeal initiative with a couple of initiatives that really do not focus on the bigger, wider issue here.

Speaker, we don't live in a war-torn country. We don't live in a place that's decimated by famine, for example. We live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but I wonder, and I question, how it's possible that our seniors lack the basic necessities, like food.

The government has a responsibility. There is a moral responsibility to support our seniors who have –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: They have been there all their lives. They have contributed in our society, yet we are not there for them. We are not doing what we

need to do and there needs to be a plan. There needs to be a strategy that really looks at everything in terms of seniors.

When we look at the budget, for example, we do know that there have been benefits that have been put in place, but we also know that over 32 per cent can't even afford basic necessities. That's of our seniors. They really cannot live.

These initiatives that the government has put in place, a seniors' care grant and a caregiver benefit and, yes, a new supplement in Labrador for food and heating, but what about in terms of the skyrocketing cost of living.

Do you know what? All we have to do is go to a supermarket. I go to a supermarket and I see the look on people's faces when they have to purchase and make choices about what foods they are getting. It's heartbreaking, Madam Speaker – it's heartbreaking – because they cannot afford these skyrocketing grocery prices, for example. They cannot afford to heat their homes. They cannot afford gas for their cars. They are struggling to make ends meet.

When I look at some of the things – again, I hear from my constituents and they say you have an important role as the critic in this very important portfolio to hold government's feet to the fire. To talk about seniors and how they're struggling, how they're suffering, how they're feeling ignored, but it's also important to show what you would do differently. Of course, that's often what is stated by the public and perhaps accounts for why they are often disillusioned with politics and politicians in general.

They may look at us and say: What is it that you plan to do? What are some of your ideas to make things better? Well, first of all, we need to look at the Health Accord. The Health Accord was an important document. The Health Accord made certain priorities.

Looking at social determinants of health a priority. Looking at affordability and access to food and housing a priority. It's about listening to the Seniors' Advocate. It's about heeding her recommendations.

Any responsible government has that responsibility. It's about us being accountable and attentive and engaging, listening and adapting. That is something that our Official Opposition is prepared to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: If you can't listen – I mean, we do a lot of talking in here, obviously. But when we go out to our respective districts and all of us do that, the entire Legislature, go out to our constituents and hear what they are saying, but there's not much point in that, if we're not listening.

When we see some the Seniors' Advocate, who plays such a fundamental role, an independent office of the House of Assembly – it was created as a stand-alone department for that purpose, to represent seniors and their concerns and their issues. Yet, if those recommendations are not being heard – and I intend to go through each one of those in the debate in the days to come.

For example, the indexing. We need to look at that, and that has not happened. We need a full review of the \$29,000 cut-off. That needs to be increased.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We need a full review of that. The top cut-off should be lower. There's no question about that. So these are some of the things.

There's no new money to the program since 2016. We know that it's not keeping pace with inflation. It should be indexed to keep up and that is something that we need to address, and those are recommendations that were put forth by the Seniors'

Advocate. These are concrete ways that we can do things that can help our seniors.

Home support and co-pay, that's another area that we need to look at. I hear from constituents in my district – people who have worked all their lives but can't afford the cost of living anymore and they need to have home support, yet the co-pay amount is out of their reach. So, Speaker, there has to be a serious analysis of that as well.

When I look at our Premier, it's important that our Premier fight for our seniors. There needs to be a raising and an indexing of the Seniors' Benefit and if we were in government, that is exactly what we would do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We need to review all of the support programs to improve them, and that is exactly what we would do. We would take heed of the Senior's Advocate's recommendations; sit down and analyze them; see what we can implement; do our best but, most importantly, listen.

Seniors are suffering. They're suffering the most, Madam Speaker. In fact, we know the Seniors' Advocate's report found a third of seniors can't even afford to make ends meet. They're skipping their meals. I think there were two-thirds that are skipping their meals. They can't afford prescribed medications or medicines. Many live on toast and tea; that's to use the Advocate's own words. Many split their medicine, compromising their health.

Speaker, that is just unacceptable. We cannot have that; we cannot have that happen to our seniors. We need for them to understand that we are listening. A couple of ad hoc initiatives? That just doesn't cut it. There needs to be a comprehensive strategy in place. The poverty plan is a paltry plan that was introduced last year claiming to be a Poverty Reduction Plan.

Yes, it mentioned seniors, but it really did not have anything in detail announced in it to help them, except what I've referenced.

Now, if I'm wrong on that, I'll certainly accept that, but that is not what we see. In fact, the November news release on the plan stated: "A targeted poverty reduction plan for seniors will be released in the coming months.... and it is anticipated that further measures to help seniors manage the higher cost of living will soon be released."

That's it, stay tuned. After four years in office, wait longer. Yet, all we saw were those poor initiatives.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I see that my time is running out. I have much to say about this important issue on behalf of seniors and on behalf of the constituents in the District of Harbour Main and, in particular, on behalf of the Official Opposition.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh): The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, there's a whole lot of transforming, modernizing and reimagining going on in this budget. A whole lot of aspirational language, at least on paper – ho-hum.

I don't know if it was intentional on the part of the writers of the speech, but the second sentence seems to contradict the rosy view. The second sentence states we are "at the peak of opportunity, growth, and prosperity." Now, I'm pretty sure that when you're at the peak there's nowhere to go but down.

There are so many reasons to vote against this budget, but I'll focus on how it fails education. The Premier announced his fresh, out-of-the-box Education Accord in January to develop a targeted approach to transforming and modernizing Newfoundland and Labrador's education system. First meeting today.

He said: "Dedicated to supporting a modern educational experience for all students in Newfoundland and Labrador, Education Accord NL will reimagine the education system to ensure students and learners at all levels receive the educational services they need in the classroom, are prepared for the modern global economy, and develop strong decision-making skills to foster positive health and well-being. Blah, blah, blah, more vacuous verbiage – more vacuous verbiage.

In fact, it sounds eerily similar to the industrial model of education that saw students and knowledge as commodities and sought to manufacture skilled labour as efficiently as possible. So much for a modern approach.

Budget 2024 fails our school communities, our students and their parents, our schools and school staff. The president of the NLTA called the budget a disappointment, like governments before it, the Furey Liberals have no intention of taking meaningful action unless, of course, it involves a photo op with teachers receiving the Premier's teaching award.

Pittance budgeted for student assistant hours, teaching services and recruitment and retention, Speaker, with the lion's share of \$20 million going towards eliminating the 1.6-kilometre school bus policy. But I will ask this: What is the point of creating safe and reliable busing or continuing to phase in the kids in the Know Body Safety Program if classrooms are unsafe, if the budget fails to address school violence, the resourcing of inclusive education, class size and

composition, teacher allocation and long-standing issues in any meaningful way?

I'll give the example of a school in the center of the city here that had reached out, where a teacher had been struck, had actually had their jaw broken as a result of an attack by a student. No blame to the student, but the fact is, the school was under resourced, it lacks the human resources just to deal with the children who are having problems with self-regulation.

In response to the announcement of an additional 125 hours per day to the total student assistant hours allotment for the remainder of the year, one principal wrote to me: 125 hours between 255 schools is a joke. Student assistants alone cannot solve the mental health crisis among our students. In the wake of a retired teacher going public about the under resourcing of inclusive education and violence in the classroom, the Minister of Education created a Teachers Think Tank to hear directly from teachers in the field.

By her own admission, the minister was moved by what she heard. Teachers and the NLTA rightfully expect to see something, anything in the budget to address the issue – nothing. No wonder there's disappointment.

Speaker, the road to educational reform and addressing the challenges facing our schools is littered with committees, task forces, reports and recommendations. Regardless of the administration, it was never about acting in any meaningful way. It's always been about the politics of delay, giving the impression of action without actually doing anything.

The recent announcement of a task force and an educational accord are no different than *The Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes* formed by the previous premier in 2016. Just one more report to gather dust on a shell. Interestingly enough, that wasn't even their own idea.

That was an idea that came from the Nova Scotia Liberals at the time. They did one; well, we should do one, too. But it had no meaningful impact on education.

If the Premier and the Minister of Education want to foster positive health and well-being in our schools, address school violence, teacher retention, the resourcing of inclusive education, dust off the 2004 report by Dr. David Dibbon, *It's About Time!! A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students* and implement his recommendations.

If anyone in the Department of Education or the English School District had bothered to read the 2011 report prepared by Darlene Fewer Jackson and Nora Cahill, a review of the services of deaf and hard of hearing students in Newfoundland and Labrador, government could have avoided a costly and unnecessary human rights case and Carter Churchill could have received the educational services he needed in the classroom.

Recently, I was copied on a letter from a parent in Western Newfoundland addressing the Minister of Education and her comment was: I feel it would be remiss of me without responding to your letter of the 12th of April, 2024, it is difficult to take any sincerity from your statement, Minister, that the government strongly believes that every child deserves an education that allows them to learn and thrive. That's a parent who has no confidence in the ability of the minister or the department to address her child's needs. She refers to the deaf education that her child is not receiving.

The report I referred to earlier talked about the current model, at the time of the report, does not provide deaf education students the opportunity to learn their own language, to be fully educated in their own language, to access full-time qualified teachers, full access to the curriculum or classroom social development or the opportunity to communicate or interact with deaf peers.

And she notes this was the deaf education characterized almost five years ago, under the previous Liberal administration, it hasn't changed according to her.

As Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the department is now fully responsible for the delivery of deaf education in the province. The expectation is that your department, with urgency, will act to export the ASL immersion classroom model created in the St. John's metro area to the West Coast. That's what they're demanding. That's what she's asking. That's what they're not getting.

NL Health Services basically admitted in its letter that I referred to earlier today to principals and school counsellors, that students in Central Newfoundland will be denied the mental health supports they need because there's a deficit in health care and education professionals. However, I take confidence in the fact that the Minister of Education will look at the problem.

To say that school communities are fed up with government's empty rhetoric and even emptier promises would be a gross understatement. Over the past few months, I've heard from parents and teachers alike about violence in the classroom, the disruption to learning, the under-resourcing of inclusive education. Enough with the endless parade of committees, do something.

Two parents in Central Newfoundland, one it says about her daughter: She has told me some mind blowing things that go on in the classroom and it's affecting her learning and the ability to succeed. For example, she has told me about incidents where students are distracting other classmates by throwing books and chairs around – this is a primary grade classroom, okay – and interrupting the teacher. Usually this involves the classroom being cleared and sent to another classroom as well. But there's also the risk of physical injury.

Another parent talked about how her child who started to talk to us about school, she did not feel safe. We learned about the bad behaviours happening in the classroom, chairs being thrown, tables being flipped, personal space being invaded and being spit on. Her child came home one day with her brand new water bottle from our vacation in pieces. This is when everything spilled and she let us know what was really happening. Unfortunately, her learning has come to a standstill. No extra resources have been put in place, but I'll pass on that the minister is looking at it.

Another case: Everything was ripped from her desk, other students had belongings thrown across the classroom and was broken as well. Our children were put out into another classroom for the rest of the day.

From a school administrator: You would be hard pressed to find someone in the school system that has not been a victim of verbal, physical or emotional abuse on a daily basis. I've lost count of how often I've been kicked, punched and spit on by students. Room clears and secure schools are very common each week. The amount of violence and inappropriate things that teachers and students are exposed to daily is criminal in my opinion. Inclusion, in my opinion, is actually exclusion.

Do you know what? There were 200 police officers here yesterday because there was a credible threat. I'm reading you examples of daily, in the school system, where there are credible threats and there doesn't seem to be any attempt to resource it and protect our students and protect our teachers.

Then there is the lack of a plan. It troubles me deeply – and I've seen this since I've been here, especially with education – when governments make decisions about the K-to-12 system for political and budget-based reasons that ignore the consequences for the education system.

In *Budget 2021* three years ago, the Liberals announced their plan to integrate the NLESD into the Department of Education. The minister at the time said we've made the decision to eliminate that Crown corporation to bring it into the department to look for operational deficiencies or fiscal deficiencies or fiscal efficiencies.

Now, I have asked during Estimates Committee meetings what efficiencies government was hoping to achieve but could not get an answer and was told that we will wait until we're into the process to decide that.

Last year when I asked, I was told that government is working on a plan for integration and one that would be ready by the fall. Almost 2½ years later, almost three years into the transition plan, the department – think about it – is only working out a plan.

Decisions like that are significantly disruptive to the school system, especially to schools that are outside the St. John's metro area, Labrador, rural Newfoundland.

A new high school for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's is yet another example. It was not a priority and I've got to keep going back to this, that it was by the NLESD. It had done the analysis. In fact, the district wasn't even consulted. That sounds familiar, lack of consultation and was surprised as the residents of Paradise who believed they were the priority for a new school.

The Education Minister said the decision came out of the infrastructure and budget discussions, but has never offered any data, documentation or minutes from those discussions to support the decision. Like so many other decisions we've heard about in this House. Another politically motivated decision, and what's more we have an acknowledgement of a secret consultation report that none of us can see, because it's secret.

At the site unveiling and the photo opportunity in July, the Premier said, “A new high school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s is critical to inspire the best learning outcomes, foster growth, and amplify opportunities for our students.”

Seriously, who writes this stuff? The irony of his statement is not lost on the residents of Paradise and the Frank Roberts intermediate school community, and other school communities in the province in need of an infrastructure investment.

The Premier also either ignores, or is unaware of inextricable connection between student enrolment, teacher allocation, programming, course offerings, extracurriculars and opportunities for students. Higher enrolments result in more teachers, which allows for more programming and opportunities for students; that’s a fact. Teacher allocation, not infrastructure lies at the heart of the current crisis in education and if you want to reimagine and modernize the education system, I would suggest that’s where it lies as well.

The members of the Prince of Wales Collegiate Council who contacted me, some of who were from Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s, understood this critical connection and were concerned about the impact on their students.

Now, PWC has an enrolment of approximately 640 students. Think about it, if half moved to the new school, if and when it is built, what programs will be cut in each school? French immersion will be offered in one school and not the other? Drama? Will students have access to the same guidance services? Will the guidance counsellor be shared between the two schools? Will they have same extracurricular activities? How will teacher allocation be affected? Will the number of school administrators for each school be reduced? What’s the plan?

The questions that come to the mind of any educator, anyone involved in the education system, anyone who knows anything at all about the education system, those are the questions that are asked, which did not seem to be asked either then or now.

Somehow, I doubt these and other questions were asked or addressed during government’s budget and infrastructure budget discussions. Unfortunately, it’s going to be the school communities that will pay the price. Meanwhile, schools in Labrador, as in other parts of the province, are still without a full complement of teachers. If you’re a retired teacher, you can get full-time subbing, not only outside the metro area, but within as well. Think about that.

If the Premier is truly concerned about learning outcomes, fostering growth and amplifying opportunities for our students, then address the teacher allocation, the class size and composition, the use of fractional teaching units – who goes teaching in a rural community for a 0.25 position? How do you even afford that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: While you might have a 0.25 position, I can tell you that you’re not doing 0.25 of the work; it’s 100 per cent. Pay them accordingly. Put the full resources there. I can tell you any school or teacher lounge that I go into, you will not find teachers there with their feet up on their break. There is no break. They are going to get work done. You will be underserved by this. Yet, we still have these fractional units that inhibit anyone from going into the profession.

If it’s about student physical health, then ensure all schools have an up-to-date HVAC system to ensure good air quality for students and staff. Make sure that the class size doesn’t actually violate the fire code regulations in the classroom. I can guarantee you that if you did an audit, you’d find that there are an awful lot of classrooms that have way too many people, bodies in

that classroom. That's actually what I would use at one time to get the district and the government to actually provide the extra resources. It's shameful when you think of it.

Look, as a former teacher, I can tell you I'm fed up with the pretty words, the disingenuous rhetoric, the committees, the dust-gathering reports, the news conferences that promise action but don't deliver. I can tell you that education workers, students and parents in this system are even more frustrated. They're at a breaking point.

When I see a budget that actually addresses these problems, I will consider voting for it. That is not this budget. I will tell you this, we did submit, on March 8, a letter to the Minister of Finance and some of the things that we recommended, if indeed this government is serious about it, about addressing the crisis in the education system, how about providing paid work terms for students in nursing, education and social work fields?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: People in engineering or business, there are paid work terms but in a profession that is dominated by females – I think in our work force there are 75 per cent female – the students have come out and not only have to pay for their tuition, but they do not get paid. Think about that. That sends a clear message as to the value of the work they do.

So if you want to put a value on it, here's one way. Increasing the resourcing of the public school system to provide for the guidance counsellors, instructional resource teachers, student assistants, educational psychologists. I can tell you that the reports I read, the letters from parents about the violence in the school system, that's just a fraction, and it's mostly in the primary and elementary grades.

The provincial government should prioritize matching the federal funding to expand a pre-kindergarten program to provide service in areas where the YMCA cannot; to assist a lack of available ECE resources, government should fund employment benefits and pensions for early childhood educators, to better retain workers. If we truly believe that these workers with children – that the early childhood educators, that is the foundation of future success, then pay them accordingly to what they're worth.

But, again, I guess it's mostly a profession dominated by women, so maybe we don't have to. Because that's the message I'm getting here.

If we want to fix the retention and recruitment and make sure that students have a safe place in which to learn, then start looking at the human resources piece. You can have a task force, a Think Tank, an accord, you can look at the problem all you like, but I have a feeling that next year, if we're at this, we'll be talking about the same thing and they'll still be looking at it.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate the acknowledgement and it's always an honour to stand in the House of Assembly and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, which I've been doing now – it'll be five years this May, I just realized about a week ago, May 17, we kind of came in here to represent the people. Have we gotten a lot done? Yeah, I guess, but there's a lot that still needs to be done that has been asked for, for at least three or four years.

Like I said, I agree with some of the other Members' statements. It depends on what

side of the House you're on how much legs that gets. After three or four years of asking for brush cutting in the Town of Petite Forte, we finally got it this year. It happened after April 1, so it was last year's money kind of thing, but I do appreciate the minister and his staff for letting that happen.

After three or four years of asking for a new rescue vehicle in Baine Harbour, we finally got that this year. Only after it had to be taken off the road because it could no longer be inspected or road worthy.

Like I said, there are things there that we continually work on. We want to work with the government of the day, but as I tell my constituents, we need that willing participant sometimes to really help us get it done.

For the things that do happen and we do get done, I'm only honoured to work on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue. I hope going forward we can continue to get things done for the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

One of the things that I want to talk about today – before I go any further, actually, I'd like to make a shout-out to a constituent of mine, Abby Farrell, that just won the Lions speak off for the province and is going to represent us in New Brunswick.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Congratulations, Abby, on all your hard work. Your skill speaks for itself. She's an amazing young woman.

Today, we wear the daffodil in here, that's to bring awareness to cancer in our province and throughout our country, which has affected all of us in some way, but it certainly has affected my family. Just last year, I lost my dad, Dennis Francis Dwyer. In '21, I lost my bother at 45 years old, Jereld Dennis Dwyer and I've lost several uncles on the Coady side of my family, as well. So any way that I can support cancer awareness, I'm certainly there to do that.

The reason why I bring that up today is that I want to say thank you to our health care workers because once you're inside the system and you are being looked after, they are second to none. They are so compassionate; they're so ready to help; they go out of their way; they work longer shifts; they don't want to see you left alone or anything like that. That's the one thing that I'd like to say is thank you to our health care workers for providing that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: To segue from that very heavy topic is to also talk about what's going on right now inside of our health care system. I have a constituent in my district that presented last May with some issues. In June, she was written a letter saying that she needs an emergency MRI. In February of this year, '24, she was given a letter saying that her emergency MRI is scheduled for July of 2025. I don't understand how we can still use these words like "emergency" or "much needed" or anything like that, if that's the delay that's going to be behind it.

That has nothing to do with our health care workers; it's the system. It's the fact that we have a new hospital going up out in Corner Brook that was promised an MRI unit and we don't know if it's going to be opened on time because they can't staff it. Maybe that's the fact that they're staffed fully in St. John's, is that because there are a lot more services and that here? I would say not because Corner Brook is a city. Maybe it's got something to do with the fact that we pay our health care workers in the cancer departments less in rural Newfoundland, which we say was outside the overpass, than we do inside the overpass.

That is not fair. It's not right. It shouldn't happen. That unit should be opened out there in Corner Brook to help all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, so they don't have to travel across the province. The amount that you pay for the unit would

probably save more in just gasoline for people from the West Coast to come here.

We're failing our people if we're not going to give them – the Health Accord said that – their treatments or give them their health care where it's needed, at the time when it's needed. I just indicated two situations where we're not doing that at all. That's not right. We have a public health care system that is here to do the right thing.

The reason why we came up with that was because we put that in place at a time when our economy was just like it is today. The people were bewildered, they didn't know where their next dollar was coming from, living cheque to cheque. We have people living cheque to cheque now that never lived cheque to cheque their whole life. That's not fair. We have to focus on the economy; let's get our people back to work.

I'm in talks with the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology and we're moving forward, I'm hoping in the right way. We're still waiting on the RFPs and stuff like that, but we move forward so that this is a benefit – in going into wind energy, it is a benefit to the people of the province. We should have already learned from the fishery, forestry and mining. We don't wait until the last minute to make this work. We don't put the wrong players in place so that it's about a greedy situation. We put all the right players in work so that this becomes a benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is our resource. So why should we be a stakeholder because we own the resource? Let's be a shareholder because we own the resource. We need to get some dividends; we need to have community benefits agreements. I hear that is being negotiated in other jurisdictions in the province; yet the whole Burin Peninsula is being held up with Crown lands because of the implement waiting and then on the isthmus side, we're in the same situation, we're in a holding pattern. But that's what we're waiting for, we need that information. The minister has

agreed to come out and have a meeting with the new isthmus alliance that we just created on the isthmus region, including Sunnyside, Come By Chance, Arnold's Cove, Southern Harbour, Chance Cove and the other smaller entities in between.

But the thing is, that's what we need. We need to have the right players around the table. We need to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Not because there are eyes on us or it gives us a photo op or anything like that. Let's do the right thing because we – all 40 Members – are here to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not ourselves.

I'm certainly not. I can speak for myself. I'm here to represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue and I guess in my last mandate they spoke very clearly on who they wanted in this House. I appreciate that. To all the people of Placentia West - Bellevue, thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: I will move on to talk a little bit about our education because it came up today about this inclusion strategy, that we have never seen or have any piece of, and we talk about support staff when it comes to children with disabilities.

As a father of a child with autism, my son, Parker Dwyer, hasn't had any help or anything like that now for three, almost four years. Is he doing fine? Well, because we are probably putting in so much effort at home and we work with him. We broaden his horizons with experiences. We are not raising him any different than we raised our other son.

But the thing is when you have special needs, there are things that come up from time to time that might be needed. So if he had even somebody in a classroom with him for an hour or two a day, or a week even. He has zero right now. He's put in the mainstream and he's on his own basically.

When I can make a comment to the minister that's answering a question about inclusion and about support staff in schools, then I'm coming from a very personal entity of understanding.

What I would ask the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education is to come together and talk to the boots on the ground. Let's not make ivory tower decisions on this stuff because it's about dollars and cents and availability and all that kind of stuff. Let's talk to the parents, let's talk to educators, let's see what the needs are and let's approach the needs. It's not a dollar-and-cent thing. It's about getting the right people in the right place to do the right job. These people need them.

Having somebody in place to help a child with special needs, again, same as my colleague from Harbour Main said about our seniors, it's our duty. That's the kind of society we live in, is that we look out for the most vulnerable.

Right now, the way the economy is going is that even our middle class now is becoming vulnerable when it comes to the economy and the cost of living and trying to strive to make ends meet. So if you have a child in that household with special needs, then the level of care is also costly and it's also something that is becoming unrealistic to try and strive for. That don't just happen inside the metro; outside of the metro is a big issue as well.

I just don't want our teachers that have gone out and gotten a degree on their own time to be turned into daycare workers, which are also very valuable in our society. But we put the right people in the right place and offer the right services in the place that it's needed. That's what our Health Accord said.

We didn't disagree with the Health Accord, because there was a lot of really smart things that came out of that. Were they all? No, absolutely not. But when it comes to

inclusion strategy, how about you show us one instead of just announcing one? That's what I'm looking for. That's what I want to see. I want to see a plan. I want to see where we're going with this. I want to know that not only my son is looked after when he goes to school, but every child has the ability to succeed with their education, socially, whatever it is.

But the thing is that if we don't have the right people in the right place at the right time, helping our teachers, helping our administrators, we're not going to get there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: So that's what I'd be looking for.

The next thing I'd like to approach – especially in my district, and I know I don't speak for the Member from Burin - Grand Bank, but I need to speak about the Burin Peninsula. Because the Burin Peninsula now is coming together to talk about the economy, to talk about many things because we realize that the segregation or the divide and conquer is not going to work with how sparse our population, how spread out we are.

But the biggest thing that's really facing us now is mental health issues, but housing. I think the housing piece is what's causing some of the mental health issues and drugs and addiction are part of that, too. But when we look at housing, we have so many units that are not filled because we can't get them refurbished. I brought it to the House. I've talked to the new Minister of Housing and the MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island. But since we talked, I'm just wondering how many staff we've hired.

Because, right now, we have a plethora of housing units on the Burin Peninsula and I have two maintenance people that do everything from replace windows to mowing lawns. They go from Point May in the District or Burin - Grand Bank right to English Harbour East in my District of

Placentia West - Bellevue. We're understaffed.

I've brought this to the attention over the last five years. Like I said, I've been here since May 17 – the first day that I represented the people of Placentia West - Bellevue was May 17, 2019, because they asked me to. They gave me the mandate to do that. That was one of the first things I brought forward. It still hasn't been looked into or done.

Like I said, if we want to look at why we have issues, it might be the fact that we don't have a willing participant when it comes to bringing forward some of the solutions that we're suggesting, because we're listening to the boots on the ground.

I'll tell you another thing. It's not just the units that are vacant, that are not refurbished so we can move new people in and give them keys. We have people that are living in squalor, because they're afraid to report that there's mould in their house and all this kind of stuff, so they don't get pushed out of it and end up having to live in a field in a tent. That's not right. Let's look after these people.

We're trying our best to give people a leg up. Nobody wants a handout. Nobody wants a free ride or anything like that. They just want to have some dignity and understand, like, everybody deserves to have a roof over their head, I don't care who you are or what you say; everybody deserves to have a roof over their head. Do we have that right now? No.

We have a wait-list of over 3,000 people, we heard here already in the House today – 3,000. But we also have units that would take people out of that squalor and out of that impetus to not have a roof over their head.

In the four minutes that I have left, I want to talk about Volunteer Week because that is something that – I always would like to end

on a positive note, because our volunteers are really the impetus of running this province. We could not do it – and I know, and I'm speaking for Placentia West - Bellevue, but every community relies on their volunteers. I guess on the top of that chart for me would be our volunteer firefighters, because there's nobody else that we could thank more, as a volunteer, than our volunteer firefighters.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: What I've brought forward to the government is to have a look into us matching the federal contribution for a tax credit for our volunteer firefighters, so that we can actually show them the respect that they desire. Because the bit that they're getting from the federal government hasn't been indexed or hasn't been changed in a long time; therefore, I think that if the province matched it, it would actually attract more volunteer firefighters and it would make the ones that are already there feel welcomed and feel dignified and feel like they're actually making a difference and they would stick around.

I have a gentleman in Arnold's Cove, over 50 years now; I have a gentleman in Norman's Cove-Long Cove up around 50 years; I have many that are between 35 and 50 years. Like I said, these people are dedicated to their communities, let's show them the dignity that they deserve because they do deserve it.

The next thing I'll say when we talk about Volunteer Week is that all of our town councils, for the most part, all of our LSDs, they're all run by volunteers. They put up with an awful lot because they're the front line for their community to get improvements done or to get something done or to listen to committees or to listen to individuals about their needs. I would commend, also, our council members and our mayors and LSD board chairs and board members to say thank you. You are

making a difference to every single person in our province. Thank you.

When we look at volunteering, there are also our dedicated organizations like the Lions clubs and the Kinsmen clubs of the province. Just this year, here at the, I think, 26th of April, the Lions Club in Marystown is going to be celebrating their 50th anniversary of their Charter Night. I'm 54 years old, so they've basically been in the Marystown area, helping the people of Marystown area, as long as I've been alive. That's pretty commendable. I'm only honoured to go join them and celebrate with them and let them know how appreciated they really are.

That's not withstanding any other organizations. They're all very important because what they bring to the table is compassion and love for their fellow neighbour. Like I said, in working with all of them, a lot of times when you're in smaller communities, the ones that are on council and the ones that are on these service organizations and on the volunteer fire department, are sometimes the same people.

I just want to say thank you and a very heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers that do daily duties for the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always nice to get up and represent the people of the Exploits District, the people who put me here and to talk about some of the concerns and issues they have.

We know that there's a budget in play here and the people of the Exploits District have

told me some stories, they've told me some issues. I'd just like to relate some of those stories and issues along the way that are important to them. It's their way of life right now and right now they are struggling with the way they live, for the most part of it.

To bring me forward, I'll go back to the 2016 budget. The Liberals got in. They cut programs. They raised taxes. They put in levies and fees. They cut the poverty reduction plan. Yet, they came out with an economic plan called a better tomorrow. It's almost 10 years ago. I think you can ask most people on this Island, especially in my district: How's your better tomorrow? I think they'll tell you: I haven't seen it yet. My better tomorrow is not there. Actually, my better tomorrow hurts. We're still waiting for that better tomorrow.

They're still paying high taxes. They're still paying high fees. We'll just mention, I guess, the carbon tax, the sugar tax, still taxes and fees, creating a big burden on the cost of living. We know what it's like to pull up at the pumps, the extremes right now it is to fill up those tanks for the individuals trying to get to work in my district every day so they can feed their families. While they're trying to make those choices that the Liberals wanted them to make, to make those choices for a better tomorrow in health is the sugar tax. Apparently, they can't make those expensive choices that it takes to live better because they can't afford to get to work to make that extra money to do that.

So when you're looking at a better tomorrow – no, it's not here, not yet. It's not here yet. There's a lot of work to do.

Actually, I'll just mention education there for a second. I've heard it brought up here a couple of times today on education. I sat down in a meeting with a young parent in my district a couple of weeks ago. She was trying to get her child now, who is five years old, who missed her first year of school, actually, because she's a child with autism.

The supports are not there to keep that child in school.

The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue just brought up that important issue, actually. So it's not something that the government don't know. Is it making a better tomorrow? By no means, we're still not there – we're still not there.

I sat down with this young parent, a child, five years old, has missed now the first full year of school because the supports are not there for that child to go to school. She's written an email to me and to others and she does say there: My daughter is bright, willing to learn and engaged, when in an environment conducive to her learning style, having a trusted person with her is simply one way she'll move forward. Just to have a trusted person.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Is that so hard? Our education, where we should be starting now today with those children. Is that so hard that we can't give them a better tomorrow? I don't think so, I really don't think so.

Now if you're looking for some funding to help out there. In my district, I can find a million dollars, right now; I can find a million dollars in one term: Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor.

Instead of the Premier's office in Grand Falls-Windsor, let's get some help for that child.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Not helping candidates that are going around making promises to open up a 24-hour emergency service in Botwood, that they didn't come through on. Yet, that don't matter b'y, I'm going to work in the Premier's office. So let's help out the child who actually needs it. Let's make their tomorrow better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Not a failed candidate. Let's do it for that child.

So when I look at that and I look out and I always reflect on that: a better tomorrow. We're still not there. There are lots of ways we can do it.

Again, a few issues that I looked at: red tape reduction in Crown Lands. I don't see anything in the budget for red tape reductions in Crown Lands. Crown lands: we can develop the farming, especially with farming people need land for the increase food insufficiency. Food insufficiency is becoming a big issue in our province. Is that a better tomorrow that we have food security problems? Is that a better tomorrow? I don't think so. Again, I don't think so.

It's costing us more to ship in freight. The carbon tax is high; diesel is high; the boats to get it here, if it gets here on time. We can't get the stuff here; high costs when it does get here. We certainly need to be able to loosen up Crown lands, loosen up the red tape so that we can grow those foods, that we can support the family that's trying to get the work, to be able to buy those meals; support those families that are trying to get help for their children to go to school; to be able to put food on their tables.

In order to do that, we certainly have to look at red tape reduction, and we're not there. When we're looking at food insecurity, we're not there.

Again, I mentioned poverty reduction, we're having trouble getting healthy foods on our tables. That's part of the poverty reduction. Is that a better part of a better tomorrow? Again, I don't think so. Maybe other people think otherwise, but I still don't think we've seen a better tomorrow. Almost 10 years later, we're still looking for that better tomorrow.

Agriculture, again, beef I know is a program that the government tried a few years ago. They brought in the cattle. They allotted it to farms. I don't think that program got very far. Actually, abattoirs got cancelled, shutdown, the abattoirs did. I think there was one in my district, actually, that they were going to –

E. JOYCE: Did they shut it down?

P. FORSEY: They shut it down, yes. They helped them out to get funding and then they shut it down.

So, if we can't produce our own beef in this province when we can, then that's not a part of a better tomorrow. We're still waiting for a better tomorrow.

Forestry: I don't mean to be picking on one department, but it seems to be looking that way when it comes to red tape reduction. Forestry in Central Newfoundland, our forest industry, they can say forestry is big dollar wise in Newfoundland. Yes, it is. Can't argue the point. But the secondary processing in Central Newfoundland is not there. Why? Because everything is being taken out by three big companies, actually, that have all the permits, everything tied up.

In 2018, they unlocked 280,000 cubic metres of fibre from the old Abitibi permits. Everything tied up. Hardly anybody can get any permits in there. They can hardly get domestic permits. There's no activity in Central Newfoundland with regard to forestry. We're known as the fibre basket out here and we can't get access to our own permits.

There was an allotment there for some sort of industry to go in Central Newfoundland after Abitibi closed down. That's gone. Still no permits there. That's gone. That's even used up. Somebody got it. Somebody got the permits, but it's not there to be used in Central Newfoundland for secondary processing, which can create jobs in the Central area to make for that better

tomorrow. A better tomorrow is just not there.

Health care: I know there's been some emphasis put on some of the issues in Grand Falls-Windsor. The Family Care Teams, there have been a couple of units, but we've got doctors still closing their practices, still leaving the Central area and still haven't got that hands on for the doctors. You can't get that access to the physicians. We haven't got that actual health care for people with serious problems to be able to go see a doctor and to be able to be treated and assessed, the right assessment done to them.

Again, we'll look at the seniors in the district. The seniors are telling me that they're still having trouble to heat their homes, stay in their own homes, which is causing grief to some of the seniors in the area. I'm sure if we told them that they'd have a better tomorrow, I don't think they do. I really don't think they do, from what they're telling me. They're finding it cold in their own homes. Finding it cold in their own homes, in the wintertime. I guess they're longing that summer is coming. They can't afford the food; they can't afford to buy healthy food to put in their fridges. I get those stories; I'm talking to them. I'm sure everyone else is, too.

So you're looking at a senior and telling them that back in 2016, there was going to be a better tomorrow. No, they haven't got the better tomorrow.

Anyway, medical transportation, another big one – I hear it all the time in health care. They're trying to get access to health care for starters. Whereas they've got to go to the bigger centres now. They've got to come to St. John's. They've got to go to Corner Brook. They've got to go elsewhere because they've got to see a specialist. Even when they get there, sometimes, they're told that their appointment is cancelled. No, they're not seeing you today; you're going home. So they've got to turn

around and get a hotel. They've got to drive back to districts or whatever, across Newfoundland and Labrador, at a high cost to them, because medical transportation is a burden on them. Health care is a burden on them.

Is that what you call a better tomorrow? No. We're still not there. We're still not at the better tomorrow. There are things that we could be doing. We need to put those emphasis in place, especially with the cost of living right now and the high taxes that the people are paying, to make those choices for healthy foods, they're just not doing it. To get those healthy food, healthy living that they need – I can't see where they're going to be able to make that right choice if that's what it is to make those healthy choices to help health care, then they can't make those healthy choices. It's just not there.

The sugar tax – well, that sugar tax was part of that, you know, to help out there, but people can't make those healthy choices. I heard somebody talking about water. There is water in the province – they can't even drink the water. When you can't drink our own water in some places, what are you going to do? You can't drink your own water; what are you going to do? Go out and buy Pepsi? Is that healthy choices? When we can make better water filtration, better water systems in our province that they haven't even got to be trying to make those choices.

The issues that I'm hearing – I've heard them in my district. I've heard them throughout the province here. I've heard every Member get up and talk about those sorts of issues.

Roads, again, in the area – I get all kinds of calls on the roads, especially in the 60-, 70-kilometre zones. I've talked to previous ministers. I've talked to the current minister. They know about the 60. I put in emails about the 60 kilometre, 70 kilometre. Some

of the TCH is okay. We've had some previous work done on the TCH.

But in the lower zones, going through communities, potholes, roadwork itself needs to be done. There's a kilometre or two, even a couple of kilometres in those districts would certainly make it easier for transportation, especially emergency vehicles trying to get down through the lower parts of my district. Especially down to Leading Tickles, Fortune Harbour, that area. Making it easier. They're not even beating up their cars in the summertime.

I'll soon be getting those calls now, tourism time, that kind of stuff, people travelling down in the area. I will get calls, b'y, I damaged my wheels, damaged my tires; \$1,200 it cost me to get the car fixed. They look at that kind of stuff.

It's maintenance that needs to be done at a right time. That kind of stuff can be done through maintenance, but if they spent some money in my district, in those kilometre zones, then maintenance would be easy. Fix the road that they're not going down every second week fixing the potholes, fixing the sides of the roads. Fix the road. Give me a couple of kilometres here and there.

That way, then, the maintenance crew can do their job. They can fix their guard rails. They can fix their signs. They can keep the roadwork up. But a few kilometres in certain detrimental areas that I've asked for, I can't get it – can't happen. Yet, when you drive down to certain areas, b'y, it seems like there are lots – we're not short of payment. It's all in different districts, not in Exploits. But it's all in certain areas.

I think that should be shared up a bit. The people in the district would like to see that emphasis put on roads. You go down Route 340, Route 340 is wonderful, stretched all the way down. I don't why, but anyway, Route 340 has lots of –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: No, 360 has plenty of it. You have to bypass Exploits. You have to bypass Route 350 to get to Route 360, well, guess what? Speaker, 350 didn't get it; 360 got plenty. Had to take a route to get down there, apparently.

Anyway, that's what happened in the blacktop there. We need that stuff in different areas. We certainly need the roadwork in my area to be maintained and to be kept up so that people in my district can have it better.

I'll just mention forestry, itself. I'm hoping this year that the water bombers, the full fleet – I'll just mention the water bombers because it's getting that time of year. The fire season is coming and I'm hoping that the water bombers are up to snuff. I'm hoping that the pilots are all ready to go, full complement of pilots for the water bombers so that we're going to have a good fleet ready to go when the forest fire season happens. Because we're all talking about climate change and we know that the forest fires are a big part of the climate change.

We need everything. We need to have the water bombers, we need have the full complement up and running before this fire season happens because I know, in the past, we've had some trouble with the water bombers, we've had some trouble with the pilots and we've had some trouble in Central Newfoundland with fires, a big lot of fires, too – massive fires.

I'm hoping that stuff is going to be corrected for this season and that we can have a full complement of water bombers and a full complement of pilots. We certainly need that to protect our forests. If we're going to keep the industry in Central Newfoundland, the forestry industry –

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

P. FORSEY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any other speakers?

Oh, sorry, I think it was the glare.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker, and you're going to start on me already. That's a pretty good start.

It is certainly a privilege to get up and represent the District of Ferryland. Again, I'd like to thank all the constituents for putting me in here. I guess my job is to come in here and bring up all the issues that are in the district. Some of them I'll certainly touch on, and we've had some good stuff happen for sure, I'll certainly touch on that as well. I'm going to start today first on health care and dealing with the nurses and doctors in the area.

I know that in some of the nursing positions – and I have some friends that are nurses, they're managers and some of the issues that have been caused, have been caused by government, whether it be this one or the previous one, it's something that they caused.

They've let the nurses come in and take temporary part-time positions and be able to come in on a call-in basis instead of being a nurse or doctor full-time. Some of these nurses, they are on a call-in basis. So if you call them Friday, Saturday and Sunday, well they're not going to answer their phone and they're not going to come in.

But there are people in these hospitals that are full-time nurses, permanent positions that are working 25 or 30 years in the system, and they're looking at people that can come and go when they like. That's not

to blame that person that took that temporary position, that's to blame the government for putting these opportunities in for them to be able to do that. It's not right.

You have people in there 25 and 30 years and you have people who are coming in there, going on a temporary basis and come and go whenever they answer the phone and anything that they get. It just doesn't make sense to be able to do it. It just doesn't make sense why we do that. It just doesn't make sense.

I've had, probably in the last two weeks, three or four calls from people, one person had their mom in the hospital, in emergency room for three days on a stretcher. She had cancer. Every district is dealing with this, I'm sure of it. They're in there on a stretcher for three days and they call you and say it's so degrading. They're in there in the hallway, they're not even in a room, they're in the hallway. I've been over there, there's no privacy.

So we're trying to fix this system, but this system is totally broken in the emergency room. We can't blame the people who are in there; we have to blame the system, the way we have it set-up. Now, once they get into the hospital and get up in a room, the care is unbelievable. Not that they're not getting good care down there, because they are, but to leave somebody on a stretcher for three days in the emergency room and then finally be able to get up to a room.

I had another person call me last week, he had heart issues, got shipped in from Carbonear. They sat in the emergency room for three days again before they got put up in a room. God love the people in the health department because you make a call to the EA and they do the best they can to help you and I tell you I thank them very much for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We all have to call on them, but we shouldn't have to. If the system is run properly, we shouldn't have to be doing that.

People are out in the waiting room 15 and 16 hours waiting to get taken care of. As soon as you go in, they take your name and number, take your MCP, you get triaged, you think you're getting in right away and you go back and sit down on those chairs, that are harder than the concrete floor out here. They're sitting on them for 15 and 16 hours. That's what we put them through. We put those chairs in there and they're not fit to sit on. You have to sit there for 15 or 16 hours; people give up, they go home.

Now if you were in a service industry where I was and if you had vehicle in for service and you didn't show up for your appointment, they'd call you. Now these people have gone in, been triaged, they sat there for eight or 10 hours, they leave and go home. Does anyone ever call them back? Do they have that? They can't. They have that system set-up that they're in and triaged and they don't ever call them back when they leave. They didn't go in there to sit down for seven or eight hours. They're just so frustrated, people who are very sick and it's so frustrating for them.

To listen to the stories, and we all listen as MHAs, we all hear the stories. We cannot say that we don't hear those stories. To sit there for seven or eight hours and then leave and go home or go in there for three days and people call you, your heart bleeds for them. Now, if you do something for them, you're skipping someone else. It's just not fair. It's not right what we're doing.

You have to get over there and experience it for yourself. I hope we never have to go over and experience it yourself. That's the problem. If we go over there and sit down for 10 or 12 hours as an MHA, then you're going to experience it, if you don't skip the queue. Go over and sit down, and I know that we're not going to skip the queue, I'm

not. Other people might have that opportunity, but if you go over there and sit down, you've got that issue. It's unbelievable that we have to sit there for seven or eight hours and not be taken care of or go sit there for three days in emergency. It's totally, totally wrong.

These families are pleading with you to get my mom off the corridor. She's out there with a gown on and it's just so embarrassing. It's not where they should be at 75 or 80 years old or whatever age they are. It's just not right. And we know it's not right. But we have somehow got to get out and get that fixed.

That is where it starts, right there at emergency. That's where it starts for people going into hospital. They don't get up in their rooms without going through emergency or they're coming in an ambulance. One way or the other, they've got to go through emergency.

Sometimes you go in there in an ambulance and you sit there probably two or three hours in an ambulance because it's so full, depending on what's going on there. I can sit here and there are people in our caucus that were after going through that, we're after hearing stories. We know what it's like. It's not easy to sit here and listen to it or even hear it, but it's what's happening. It's real life and you get up here and you've got to talk about it. That's what we're put in here to do, is to represent the constituents in our district and these are the issues that are coming through.

I had a call, probably three weeks ago now, of a gentleman – I had two calls, basically, and they're pretty well the same, they have some drug issues. I didn't know him personally. They're calling me because I'm their MHA and that's my job to come in here and bring it to light so that people can try to fix this issue.

So they had drug issues and they're trying to get into a recovery centre, to get

downtown to get some help. So they call me and say: Well, I can't get no help. They call down to the department where they're supposed to go or they go down and they say: Well, call us back tomorrow at 12 o'clock. That happened on a Tuesday. Call us back tomorrow 12 o'clock on a Wednesday. So they call and no openings. Call me back tomorrow at 12 o'clock on Thursday. Call me back tomorrow on Friday at 12 o'clock. This happened four days. The person finally got in.

That person needed help right that day and her mom was calling me on her behalf. She's only 25 or 30 years old, never went though it in her life. They're crying on the other side of the phone to you. It's real life. I mean, it's not easy to take. It's absolutely what's happening out there and it's something that we have to – we have to help these people.

I had another gentleman that lived up further in the district, the same thing. Now, I did get a hold to a person that spoke to him and when they phoned down two days in a row, the third day he finally got in. After he was finished his treatment for two or three days, they decided, okay, you're finished now. We'll put you out by the door. You've got to go at 12 o'clock. He needed to speak to someone – it's just incredible that they were going to let him go without anybody there. He would have liked to stay in another day. His friend was trying to help him out. He knew if he comes out, he's going to be right back where he started again, and they just ran through that system.

The gentleman that he was speaking to called down to check – so I will give him credit; I'm not going to say his name. He called down to check on why he's being released, who he should be released to, and it should never happen. We got to be taking care of these people. We have to.

We have a major drug issue in this province right now. Twenty years ago, you look at

this on TV; it's happening here now in our province. That was in the movies 20 years ago. It's all here now: cocaine, heroine, everything. It's all here. We have to deal with it. So we have to get on board and get the program set up right so that people can get the help that they deserve.

I have a gentleman today that's in St. Anthony, as we speak, getting a hip replacement. He had an opportunity – he had been waiting. He had one done last year or the year before. He's literally going around with a cane. I've seen him; I know who he is. He is gone to St. Anthony to get his hip replaced today. Because that's the opportunity. He needed to get it done right away and he wanted to get it done right away and he would have went anywhere to get it done.

There are a lot of people that are in the same position that don't have the same opportunity to do that. They can't afford to go up there. They can't afford to stay. They can't afford to drive there. They're waiting two and three years to get in. MRIs – another Member for Placentia West - Bellevue said two years away for an MRI. That's crazy. It's crazy how we're letting that happen.

Another gentleman – I spoke to him dinner hour today – I told him to send me an email. Because we deal with so many stories and so much stuff that's going on, you want to have it in writing so you don't miss some of the points that he's trying to make to you. He went away to get an MRI in Quebec. Because he didn't wait to get approved, they're not covering anything or him.

I gave it to the minister before I left last time, before we had break, and they're not covering anything for him because he didn't get it preapproved before he left. Now, I understand that, but the gentleman went away – he was getting treatment here for what they thought was cancer, went away and determined that it was different form of cancer, didn't need to be taking that drug,

could have saved some money for the department, but we don't want to hear it.

Not that we don't want to hear it. The system is so fooled up that we're not doing anything about it. So he went away and paid for all that and he's not getting reimbursed for some of his expenses that he's saving our government money by doing that. If he had to get the MRI quicker, he would have saved the government some money, but no, we have this MRI issue that so many people are waiting, it's incredible. It is incredible that we have to wait that long. It totally is.

I'll get back to the ambulance issue. I've certainly spoke on that on numerous occasions. We did get a rapid-response unit in the district that I have seen on many occasions, I'll certainly tell you that, and it's appreciated because we have one ambulance that was in Trepassey and one that was moved from Trepassey go down to Cape Broyle, so there are two in Cape Broyle. We still have a gap because once that ambulance leaves Trepassey, there's no ambulance available. Unless you make a call, it's going to come from St. Mary's or it has to come from Cape Broyle to go up once that ambulance is gone out of the district.

I learned about that, I'm going to say – my first year as an MHA, I learned about that driving in the Trans-Canada, that the ambulance is gone out of Trepassey. No notice given to an MHA, nothing, to say that the ambulance was coming out of the district. Now that's not the minister that's in today; that's the previous minister. But no notice.

Today I have another email from a person. Yesterday I became aware that one of the two nurse practitioners at the nursing clinic in Trepassey is soon going to be relocated to Holyrood. Well now, I heard about this at 2:17 today. No one ever let me know. Or they didn't let the hospital know so they could let the town know where the nurse practitioner is. That's incredible.

He said, back in March 2022 I wrote to protest cutbacks in the services here. I was assured no cutbacks were planned and if anything changed, it would be publicly announced. She heard this today. I'm not going to read the rest of the email, but as you can see, that's the kind of notice I got as an MHA. It's ridiculous – it's ridiculous.

The ambulance left the same way. It left the same way. Can anybody tell me that that's fair? That's totally unfair and all you're doing now is starting rumours in the small communities in all these outport places – rumours. I don't know if it's true or not, but they heard it at the hospital where they're to – or at the clinic, I should call it. That's what they heard.

Now you're starting a big pile of rumours that I have to deal with, that I have not been notified. That's incredible. It's just mind-blowing that that stuff can happen and you don't know. I can tell you when we are government if we have stuff, I'm going to let the people know, if I'm at it, that if there's something going on in their district, they're going to know. That is what I plan on doing, I tell you that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: If we have an announcement in my district, I'm going to plan on calling someone. If it's going to be somewhere else on the Island, I'm going to call that MHA that's representing that district to be there. I don't want to be in the picture, I don't care, care less about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: But you have to let the people know and the MHA know in the district what's going on. Whether it's a good story, great. Yes, you go up there and get your pictures. I can stay out of the picture. But you should be there to represent the people. I got elected in to represent my district and I should be there. No question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: We came back – and I'll leave the health care, and there are a lot more stories that I'm going to tell when I get other opportunities. But I'm just trying to give a picture of what's going on in the health care. I'm trying to touch all of it. It's hard to touch all of it. Everybody here can get on – everybody meets as a caucus. You can sit down and everybody can tell stories every day of what's happening. Some are frightful, as we heard this week, they're frightful.

I'll go to a daycare issue. So, right now, we have trouble trying to get nurses and nurse practitioners. There are so many around – there is a nurse practitioner in my district who has a daycare issue. The kid that she's got is going to turn two in – I'm going to say, it might have been March, it might be April coming up. At two years old, the kid is going to time out of that age group of two years old and there is no room for her to go into the next group to be able to keep her kid in daycare.

I'll touch on daycare after because it's certainly something that is very valuable.

So here we are creating \$10-a-day daycare, great, now she's going to be timed out. She's a nurse practitioner, one of two that's in Ferryland. Now, she got to give up her job. She got no other choice, she got to give up her job to be able to take care of her kid and be off for 12 months to 18 months until she finds a suitable spot to put him, however long it takes, and now we're down another nurse practitioner.

This is the kind of stuff that's happening in the daycares. This is absolutely happening and that's where it sits. Not everybody here, but I'm sure there are a lot that can all speak for daycare, I'm sure of that. They definitely can speak for daycare.

I think in 2019, they were going to have pre-kindergarten. Where did that ever disappear to? No one ever brings that up.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was on the Order Paper.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It was on the Order Paper: going to be pre-kindergarten – never brought up. It's incredible the stuff that happens. It's incredible.

We'll get on to the daycare and we'll get on to the schools. We got a school over in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and we got one in Kenmount Terrace. I'm wondering if they're going to build these schools. Hopefully, we're going to get one in Frank Roberts and, hopefully, we're going to get one in Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: They're not on the list yet. They'll get to the list, but I think they put \$50,000 out for planning of a school in Paradise, nothing on Frank Roberts, but with these schools that are in the district, they should be planning to put daycare or afterschool programs in these schools.

Why wouldn't you have a daycare built on to the school? Why wouldn't you do that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: It totally makes sense.

Certainly, in elementary schools; high schools, not so much, but if you're going to build an elementary school, why wouldn't you have daycare in it.

C. PARDY: It's great programming, too.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Right, why wouldn't you have it? There's no question about it, why wouldn't you have it?

Now, you talk about schools. Do you know what? He only got elected a couple of

months ago down in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, he happens to be in the Premier's district. There was one in the budget in 2015 for Mobile, totally wiped off. When they came in and had the election in 2015, took it right off the list, haven't seen daylight since.

We're after having one in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. There's another one over in Bay Roberts. They all happen to be Liberal districts. That's where it's all to. But there was one in Mobile that was promised, signed off on and they came in and squashed it. So now they have the elementary school in Witless Bay that they take Grade 5 and 6 out of that school, bring them up to the high school.

Now, they sort of solved that problem for now, but the growing area where I'm to definitely needs a school. We'll certainly be pushing on it, but here they are they squashed it and they can find room to put one in two months, put one down in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, we all know who it was. We don't need to worry about who it was; we all know who that is.

I'll touch on some roads in my district. I have a whole thing of petitions that I've done. The minister is looking at me and he knows that I messaged him on – hopefully there's some – in the budget we got some pavement for Witless Bay Line announced four kilometres and there is some more that was continued from last year up in Trepassey. But as the Member for Exploits had said, if we were doing some of the maintenance on this – I got a petition from the Long Run Road down in Petty Harbour; not fit to drive on.

Route Bay Bulls, from Bay Bulls to the city limits; not fit to drive on, and the minister knows that. The minister knows that. He's driving it every day. He knows how bad it is

there, rutted and terrible. We have Robert E. Howlett extension, Witless Bay Line. The Gushue Highway, we soon need brush cutting in there. It's been so long since they done anything with it, they need to do brush cutting on it.

Brush cutting, in my area, was done the summer. I spoke to the minister on it and I'm going to bring it out there because that's my job to get up here and represent the people that put me in here. So the brush cutting in my district was done the summer from Tors Cove to Cape Pond Road, probably a couple of kilometres or a kilometre and a half on each side. Never called the MHA in the district to see maybe where it might be needed best, where I'm getting all the calls from – maybe.

So now we need it from La Manche bridge up to White Horse, up toward Brigus, that totally needs to be done. I drive it, in the nighttime coming down, it should totally be done. They should tell us when they're going to do it or where we might need it most. We take the calls on it. There's no reason for anything else. They should be calling us on it, no question.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, maybe. I promise you in the next election that's what they say, yes. If you elect me, we'll get it done and when you get it done.

So with brush cutting – and there are certain areas that need to be done. We definitely need it done. Again, they should be calling the MHAs who are taking the calls. I'm not saying that we're going to tell you you're going to do this, but if you have four kilometres available, maybe we can tell you where and when it can be done or when it should be done. There might be one more urgent than the next one.

We take the calls. We put in the list that we need to be done. We put in the list for our roads, but they come out and do it in an

area – I'm not saying it wasn't needed to be done, but there's an area – and the minister knows – we met with a group – that there's an area that needed to be done way worse than the one that was done. Yes, they all need to be done.

I'm going to say and I'm going to run out of time – as we said, we're going to get in –

AN HON. MEMBER: Not again.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yes, again.

We're going to get into brush cutting and be able to do all that. Let's sit down and figure out a plan and if you've done the maintenance – what the Member for Exploits – and if you schedule to go around all this province and do brush cutting in every district, after 10 years, you'd be able to go back and do it again. It'd take you five to 10 years to get it all done. Then you'd be able to go back and do it again.

Anyway, my time is up.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: Before I call for the vote, I remind Members of the Resource Committee that you'll be meeting in the Chamber at 6 p.m. to discuss the Estimates of the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that the House do adjourn?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m.
tomorrow.

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