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HANSARD

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, I'd like to rule on a point of order raised by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands on April 17, in accordance with Standing Order 49. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands stated that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in response to a question during Question Period on April 17, 2024, used unparliamentary language when he stated "that the only thing I did yesterday right was stand up. Anything I said after that was false." The matter was taken under advisement at that time.

I have now had the opportunity to review *Hansard*, and I note that the minister, in responding to the Member's question, stated the following" "I said the only factual thing was when he actually stood up; after that, anything he said was not factual."

After consideration, I find that there is no point of order. It is not up to the Speaker to determine which is factual or not. It is a difference between opinions of two hon. Members.

Before we begin, today, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Garland Freake, who is watching the broadcast from his home. Mr. Freake will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville, Mount Pearl - Southlands and Mount Pearl North.

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on April 12, Boxing Newfoundland and Labrador recognized a long-time coach and mentor in sport of boxing. Bob Marshall of Corner Brook was inducted in the Boxing NL Hall of Fame.

This year marked the 50th anniversary of Boxing NL and Bob was one of the founder members. Bob was such a dedicated coach and a true mentor who taught those he trained how to work hard, believe in yourself and never give up. He gave so much time and energy to so many of us who took up boxing and helped shape us to be who we are today.

Bob's greatest feat was not the medals the boxers received on both the provincial and national level, but it was his commitment in giving us purpose in life, teaching us work ethic and how to be humble and become better human beings.

Personally, I will be forever grateful for Bob's guidance, support and the confidence he had in me during competitions and in life.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in extending congratulations to Bob Marshall on receiving this prestigious recognition.

Well deserved my friend and thank you for all you've done for me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Team NL for competing in cross-country skiing in the 2024 Special Olympics held in Calgary. Athletes Colin Rumbolt and Michael Budden represented the province in the Olympics showing true passion for the sport.

Local athlete Colin Rumbolt along with his mom and coach Natasha Rumbolt were welcomed home to Labrador West on March 5 by family and friends. Colin brought home two gold medals for cross-country skiing, 1K and 500M, and a bronze in the cross country 2.5 race.

Colin has been involved in the Special Olympics since 2017 and has been working hard to train for a number of competitions since then.

I'd like to ask all hon. Members to rise and congratulate Colin Rumbolt on his accomplishments and Team NL for cross-country skiing and for bringing home six medals to this province.

Congratulations to both Colin and Michael.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Today, I am pleased to recognize the accomplishments of one of the finest volunteers with the Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) team in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Stephanie Dawe.

Stephanie started to volunteer with the team just seven years ago, quickly stepping up to leadership positions while assisting with numerous searches for our community's loved ones from across Labrador.

Stephanie is the first person on the Happy Valley-Goose Bay GSAR team and the first from Labrador to be awarded SARVAC GSAR National Searcher Certification. She now works with other teams to increase the amount of certified members in the province and is now certified on CSA National Standards. Stephanie is ready to deploy on humanitarian efforts, wherever needed in our country.

Ms. Dawe also serves as a director for the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association. She was recently presented with the 2024 Union of Safety and Justice Employees National Public Safety Award for her work and dedication. This award is presented to just seven people across Canada annually.

Congratulations on this national recognition, Stephanie Dawe, and thank you for your dedication to helping others as part of the GSAR team across Newfoundland and Labrador and now Canada.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House to recognize the accomplishments of eight individuals who have given their time and talents to the sport of hockey in the City of Mount Pearl.

At a recent celebratory banquet in our community, five of these individuals: Scott Gordon, Gonzo Bennett, Denise Humphries, George Peddle and the late Cec Stoyles were inducted into the Mount Pearl Minor Hockey Hall of Fame in the category of builder; two others: Steve Locke and Patrick O'Keefe in the player category; as well as Walter Mate in the official category.

Through the tireless efforts and unwavering commitment of these hall of fame inductees, as planners and organizers, as well as in the case of the athletes, as mentors and role models, many young people in my community have benefited from both a physical and social point of view and have gone on to be very healthy, well-rounded and productive citizens.

I would therefore ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in commending these individuals for their contribution to this great sport and in congratulating them on being inducted into the Mount Pearl Minor Hockey Hall of Fame.

Go Flames Go.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Speaker, on Saturday, April 13, 2024, I had the pleasure of dropping by to bring birthday greetings to one of the oldest residents in my District of Mount Pearl North. Mr. Garland Freake celebrated his 105th birthday – yes, 105.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. STOYLES: Mr. Freake and his family are watching from home today.

Speaker, Mr. Freake was born April 13, 1919. He is a World War II navy veteran. He currently lives in his own home in Mount Pearl. He is still very active and able to look after himself. His daughters visit him almost everyday.

He tells us, proudly, that last year he was the oldest person in Canada to hold a valid driver's licence.

Last year, when I hosted a barbeque in his neighbourhood, he was one of the first residents to come out and meet his MHA.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in wishing Mr. Garland Freake a happy 105th birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize that April 22 was Earth Day.

This year's theme was Planet vs. Plastics.

Plastic pollution continues to pose a critical threat to our ecosystems, human health and our planet.

This week, officials from Newfoundland and Labrador are participating in the fourth meeting of the United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Ottawa, working toward a first-of-its-kind global agreement on plastic pollution by the end of this year.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, our government has been proactive in our commitment towards preserving our environment.

Last year, 180 million beverage containers were diverted from landfills through recycling programs in this province.

Our government will continue to advance sustainable waste management through a range of initiatives. I encourage everyone to find ways to recycle plastics and reduce consumption in your homes on a daily basis.

No action is ever too small.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We recognize that pollution is a growing threat in our environment and health. The Progressive Conservative caucus is committed to preserving this beautiful land, which we so dearly love, and encourage practising environmental preserving by combatting the issue of illegal dump sites, which are prevalent across our province.

That is why we are committed to rolling up our sleeves and working with municipalities to address this issue head-on, so that people in the province can live in a clean, prosperous environment, free from both pollution and crippling taxes. In doing so, we will create actual progress towards a brighter and greener future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We must all work together to reduce our consumption of plastics in order to protect our health and our planet. We can also reduce our consumption reliance on plastics by introducing a just transition that will boost the economy, create jobs right here and make life more liveable in our communities.

On this Earth Day we, therefore, call on the government to take climate change seriously by tabling its own just transition strategy right here in the House of Assembly.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I recognize a significant milestone as we transform health care delivery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Two new urgent care centres are being added to St. John's and Mount Pearl to provide timely access and care, reduce pressures on emergency departments, improve patient flow and resource allocation, as well as enhance the overall patient experience.

One urgent care centre will be located on Stavanger Drive and the other will be located near the intersection of Topsail Road and Blackmarsh Road.

Both new locations will include publicly funded health care providers and these are anticipated to open next year.

Mr. Speaker, we've all heard stories of people waiting lengthy periods in emergency department waiting rooms.

Patients who need urgent care for non-life-threatening health issues, such as sprains and strains, will be able to visit an urgent care centre to receive that care and will not have to wait behind patients who require emergency care, such as life-threatening health issues.

Urgent care services will play a crucial role in service delivery by providing timely and accessible care for non-life-threatening medical issues. Urgent care services are already being provided in other areas of the province.

Along with our actions, such as establishing mobile primary care teams, expanding virtual care and implementing the

recommendations made by the Provincial Surgical Task Force to reduce surgical wait times, we are taking significant steps to reimagine our province's health care system.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Speaker, the recent announcements regarding the two urgent care centres are a positive step toward health care in St. John's, providing a solution to a massive on-going issue. It is our hope that the Department of Health and Community Services is developing a timely staffing model prior to the bricks and mortar being completed to ensure the centres are operational as soon as possible. Without adequate planning and efforts by this government, these centres will be nothing more than an \$82-million empty building.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We, too, want solutions for wait times. While we hope this initiative will cut wait times, government must do the hard work of providing long-term public solutions. Please put the required resources into retention. This will prevent the poaching of vital staff

from other existing facilities to run these new centres.

Also, please invest in the social determinants of health so that fewer people show up at emergency rooms with preventable illnesses and disease in the first place.

Thank you, Speaker.

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.

As reported by CBC in January, according to the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing communications manager, interest in using the Comfort hotel for transitional housing came from the hotel owners, Clayton Hospitality. They are reaping \$20.7 million over a three-year period.

I ask the Premier: Who in his government actually did these people communicate with?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to address the question, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, the homeless situation in the tent encampment had become a significant issue with respect to the housing continuum and we needed to make sure that we're providing different options on the housing continuum, Mr. Speaker. Subsequently, that hotel in question was investigated as a

potential option in that housing continuum to meet the complex needs of those citizens.

This government will continue to work with those individuals in the tent encampment, with professionals, to ensure that they have the wraparound supports that they need and have the full set of options available to them within that housing continuum.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we also know that there was a lucrative travel nurses' contract that a Liberal lobbyist met with the Premier's office to talk about, yet the Premier won't tell us who actually communicated with this particular group on signing this particular contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I ask the Premier: Did his Liberal government actually review the proposal against other options to ensure that they were getting the best value for the taxpayers' money?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question.

I'm happy to answer it and address the House with information that it was communicated with Housing that this was a need that was a gap in our housing continuum, through folks like End Homelessness St. John's, in consultation with CSSD. It was all closely related. We knew that the gap was there. We know that the need is there and that's why we're providing this service, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, there were several other hotel owners in the City of St. John's who were more than willing to help and also put in a proposal, but they never got the opportunity. Perhaps it wasn't because their fundraising efforts weren't towards the Liberal Party.

At the end of the day, the Housing Minister said last January the services at this hotel will include mental health and addictions supports and harm reduction services from on-site NL Health Services employees.

The release from Housing said: "Clients will be identified through an intake process and health care services will include harm reduction, community health nursing, case management, mental health and addictions services and social navigation."

Is this still the case and are the staff in place?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite correctly identified the needs of these complex patients and people who are experiencing homelessness.

As this government, we intend to provide the full wraparound supports, whether that's health services available to them, mental health and addictions services available to them, social services available to them, they are being provided that and offered options towards those facilities.

They are being offered that today, Sir. They are being offered it on a regular basis with respect to the encampment currently. We intend to ensure that those services are continued to be offered in any future housing options that are available and

selected by the people that are in that encampment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: So according to the Premier, we have actually hired all these staff and they're all ready and available to go to work.

When area residents raised questions about who would be living there, the area MHA told the telegram: "The facility will be housing individuals who have demonstrated that ability to live independently and new Canadians who are moving to the province and need temporary housing."

I ask the Premier: Is this what the hotel will be used for?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, the housing continuum is complex, people need to be offered appropriate options at their appropriate time with respect to the complex needs. That said, –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – as person continues through the housing continuum, they can advance with respect to options that are potentially available for them.

This government is all about providing those options with the supports available to them so that they can live a full and leading life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it appears that the government doesn't even know exactly what they're going to be using the hotel for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's evident by the fact that in four months the only movement down at the hotel was one client left. There are still only 12 clients down there with a roof over their heads. We've leased this empty hotel for millions of dollars, four months later, over \$2 million spent and there is no one there.

I ask the Premier: When will the people move in?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, this is a temporary measure. That's why it is a short-term, three-year lease with this group.

It will fill a need that's immediate, right now, for transitional supportive living. It's an initiative that obviously these folks need. As I said yesterday, finding a house for somebody to go inside and put them in and just walk away and wash your hands, that is not what we're doing.

What we're doing is offering these wraparound supports through NL Health Services, through Justice, through CSSD, through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker. We are offering these supports because they are needed by the people and have been identified by the people we're dealing with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, four months, \$2 million later in a three-year lease and we still have nobody actually living in the hotel, that's the fact.

Yesterday, outside the House, the minister said the hotel would have 130 client rooms. Last week, the executive director of End Homelessness St. John's said it would only have 100.

So, again, I ask the Premier: Does the Liberal government have any idea of how many rooms we are getting and what the total cost is?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, what I said outside the House yesterday was that I could be corrected but it was between 120 and 130.

There are 140 rooms, as the media saw last week when we were there, some of those rooms have been converted into medical rooms that can be used – similar to what you would see if you walked into a doctor's office, an examination table and other equipment on the wall. There are a couple of those beds that are there.

There are other rooms that are going to be used for staff for counselling purposes for private areas. There is also going to be a gathering place, if you will, for people who can go and watch a movie or have a friend over or talk amongst their family members.

So there will be in that range. There are 140 rooms there, not all of them will be used for clients or for people who sign leases and who are living there, but we will maximize it to its full potential.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Four months, \$2 million, zero residents, nobody moved in, we still

don't know how many actual beds we're going to have down there.

The minister said yesterday, we'll have 10 rooms for medical purposes. We have been told that over 40 rooms will be used for medical and office space.

Again, aside from giving your Liberal friends a blank cheque, what is the plan and does government have any idea what they're going to be using this hotel for?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we have a very strategic plan and from the get-go –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: From the get-go we have been partnered with End Homelessness St. John's and our other community partners, people who are professionals, people who deal with folks with lived experience of homelessness or who are facing complex issues in their lives that they need the support of government at this time.

As I said before, we can't just find a house for somebody, put them in there and expect the problem to go away. What they need are the wraparound supports. It does take some time to set up these supports. We've been working very closely with End Homelessness St. John's over the last four months converting the hotel so that it could be appropriate for these needs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Sole-source contract, \$21 million, four months, nothing done. The Premier, a few minutes ago, told us that wraparound services were available. Now the minister is saying we have to get that;

we're working on getting those supports. Which is it?

End Homelessness have suggested they're going to need over 100 staff. Yes, 100 staff for approximately 100 beds and that doesn't include staff for security, cleaning and food services, plus the \$600,000 a month lease.

So, again, I ask the Premier: Do we have any idea of what this is costing the taxpayers of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about an initiative, a 140-room building, with 140 rooms in it, with 24-7, 365-days-a-year wraparound supports.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: So I would ask the Member opposite: What cost would you put on someone's mental health? What cost would you put on someone's ability to battle an addiction? What cost would you put on it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: I can tell you that the cost of not doing anything is a lot higher.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I certainly wouldn't be calling them protestors, that's for sure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I would also know, if I was going to sign a \$21-million contract, what I was getting for the \$21 million and how much it was going to cost me to provide the service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Those are basic things the minister ought to know and the fact of the matter is he still doesn't know when people are going to move in or how many are actually going to move in.

So once again I ask: When will it open?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, the hotel is actually open now and almost ready for people to move in. Our staff are on site, through End Homelessness St. John's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: – at the tent encampment and other areas, working with our coordinated access table. That's the group of actual professionals who deal with this on a daily basis as their job and they refer people to what was the former hotel site at 106 Airport Road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: One second.

Order, please!

The Member's down at the far end, I can't hear a word he's saying. I ask Members to keep the chatter down.

You have another 20 seconds, Minister.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, the plan is to move people into the hotel as soon as they will agree to go there and sign leases. This is how this is going to work; they will actually sign a lease. We are not forcing anyone to go anywhere. If they fit the need, they will go there and it is referred through our coordinated access table, which is all

our community partners. I have listed them many times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Four months later, we're still talking about the announcement. There's no one moved in, there's no plan and we're still talking about it. Four months later, we're still talking about the \$21-million temporary deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, during Estimates, the minister confirmed government has no interest in allowing private nurse practitioners to bill MCP. In the meantime, seniors and working-class families have to pay per visit to access primary health care.

Speaker, why does a senior on a fixed income have to pay to access health care?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I'd indicated on two occasions in this Legislature now, Mr. Speaker, last year we put in place where individuals who had no other choice but to see a nurse practitioner could submit their bills to government. We will be putting that in place again this year. That is in the process of being put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: If an individual doesn't have access to a physician, their bill will be covered.

I'm not sure how much more clear I have to make it. If an individual has paid the driver

medical, Mr. Speaker, we will cover it retroactively, provided they didn't have the option to see another primary care provider.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Minister, are you confirming that anyone who goes to see a nurse practitioner and has to pay an invoice, they just have to send it to government and government will reimburse them? Is that what you're telling us?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, that is what we did last year. We are committing again this year. We are committing again this year that if an individual doesn't have access to a primary care provider and sees a nurse practitioner to get this service that they can submit their invoice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: The question was any service. I don't think that's what's been done every year, Minister, because people wouldn't be coming to us like they are.

Speaker, the Liberals are forking over tens of millions of dollars for an American-based virtual physician service while local nurse practitioners have to turn away patients.

I ask the minister: Why?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The virtual service provided by Teladoc, Mr. Speaker, has guaranteed that any individual

in this province that does not have access to a primary care provider will have access virtually. It will also guarantee that emergency departments, instead of being on diversion or being closed, can remain open, provided they have the appropriate staff in place at the facility, but are lacking a primary care provider.

Mr. Speaker, this will ensure better service to the individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the reason the virtual physician coverage was put in place. It will ensure that while we continue to recruit, individuals will have access to primary care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, why don't you look after the local Newfoundland and Labrador nurse practitioners?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Hang on.

Seniors and working-class families do not want to wait 12 hours in an emergency room for a prescription renewal or a bladder infection. If there is a private nurse practitioner in their community, why can't they use them at no cost to them?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we put a number of initiatives in place, including expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists. If somebody has a urinary tract infection, for example, they can see their pharmacist. They don't have to go to an emergency department or to a physician.

Mr. Speaker, we are expanding services, enhancing the scope of practice for health

professionals in this province. We'll continue to do that.

But as the Minister of Health overseeing the public health care system, our responsibility is to fill the public health care system, Mr. Speaker, with employees. We still have a shortage of nurse practitioners within the hospital settings. We still have a shortage of nurse practitioners in Family Care Teams. We continue to recruit. We are not going to set up a system where they can go private when we need them in the public system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, I need to confirm this.

So the minister is telling the House, if you go to see a nurse practitioner for no matter what, if you pay a fee, that person can then submit that invoice to government and get reimbursed. It's a very important point there, Minister, because that's not what people are told. People are paying these fees; we're hearing it, you're hearing it.

Can you confirm to the House, simple question: No matter what the service, no matter what the clinic, can they send the invoice back to government and get reimbursed? That's the question.

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

T. OSBORNE: No, Mr. Speaker, the program that was put in place was to cover driver's medicals for those 75 years of age and older. If an individual does not have access to primary care and needs to see – because that cannot necessarily be done virtually.

Individuals do have access to a primary care provider virtually through Teladoc. They do have access to 811, Mr. Speaker,

and nurse practitioners who can also write prescriptions. They do have access to a pharmacist with an expanded scope of practice and they will have access to Family Care Teams as we continue to roll out Family Care Teams in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker. So the answer is no.

Speaker, many seniors do not have Internet or even computers to access virtual online services. Many rural communities don't even have suitable Internet. Again, these nurse practitioners are on the ground living and working in these areas and government is hung up on bureaucracy and red tape.

Speaker, why not make it easier for seniors versus making it harder?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Virtual care can also be done by telephone, Mr. Speaker, so there is no impediment to an individual getting virtual care through Teladoc.

We are expanding services, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that individuals in this province have access to primary care. That's what Teladoc is. Any individual who doesn't have a primary care provider now has access through Teladoc, Mr. Speaker. Emergency departments can stay open through Teladoc if they're lacking a physician or a nurse practitioner in that particular emergency department.

So we are expanding services in this province. We'll continue to recruit, to

continue to expand services and continue to put Family Care Teams in place, continue to put mobile care in place. We continue to put services in place. Unfortunately, the Member opposite, Mr. Speaker, wants us to privatize health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Two days ago, the Premier stated, in regard to the *Limitations Act*, we've been doing an analysis of this for some time and I don't want to upend anything that's going to happen in the not-too-distant future, but it is safe to say that we will be changing the statute.

In the House today, can the Premier commit to a timeline of when this act will finally be amended?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

As minister responsible for this piece of legislation and placing it on the Order Paper not too long ago, I echo exactly what the Premier said, that in the not-too-distant future there will be a bill amending the *Limitations Act* before this House and I look forward to debating that and having the full support. I expect the full support of this House on this piece of legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the Justice Minister said the spring sitting is typically focused on the budget saying, but certainly if we have the available time and the bill has been prepared and finalized, we'll look forward to bringing it.

Speaker, we have only a few weeks remaining to sit in this House, but the Official Opposition is prepared to stay for as long as it takes –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – to make available time.

Will the government make the same commitment here today?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, as everybody knows, the spring season is typically for the budget. We spent a lot of time exclusively on the budget for the last couple of weeks. Before the budget was brought forward by the Finance Minister, which I was happy to be here in the House that day, we did some other pieces of legislation and I anticipate after constituency week –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: I anticipate after constituency week, we still have time in the House –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, you have 15 seconds.

J. HOGAN: I anticipate when we come back from constituency week, I know we still have three weeks to do legislation and I can guarantee you as soon as that bill is ready, it will be the first bill that I bring down here to be debated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, Mr. Jack Whalen's trauma is real, he has been through enough. These delays are making this much more difficult. There needs to be unequivocal reassurances to Mr. Jack Whalen, his family and the people of this province that this amendment will be finalized this spring sitting of the House of Assembly. The government can make it happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I don't want to – I can't comment, actually, on any matters that are before the court right now, which includes Mr. Whalen's obviously and his statement of claim with regard to the limitation period for physical abuse against minors in this province.

But I have said on a number of occasions in this House, that this province, unfortunately, has a very sad history of sexual abuse in institutions. We've been learning about that and living with that for the last four years and, of course, individuals have been living with it personally for much longer than that.

I know that the Department of Justice deals with a lot of sexual abuse files and physical abuse is something that has come into the forefront recently through the media and through reporting on Mr. Whalen's case.

I'll say it again, I do look forward to debating the *Limitations Act* amendments when it comes to this House in the very near future.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, last evening during OCIO Estimates, when asked about \$250,000 in salary savings, the minister referred to unrelated projects and accounting practices. When questioned a second time, the minister still did not provide a logical answer.

I ask the minister: Can you please provide this House an explanation?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

That's an excellent question. I was very confused last night when we were going through that, but I have since corrected.

I don't have the sheet in front of me, but it's a Capital account. It's the Salaries line because it's salaries for a project. Because we didn't need a certain element of a project, we didn't need the salaries associated with that element of a project and the salaries for certain projects go in the Capital line.

That's why there was salary cost related to the project in the Capital section and the Salaries line.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for the answer.

Speaker, the minister also stated that \$11 million in new money was allocated between two divisions in OCIO but could not explain what it was for.

Can you please explain now how your department has allocated \$11 million with no identified projects?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

That was not specifically a question that we discussed in Estimates, but I'm very pleased that this government gave OCIO an extra \$11 million in this budget to improve the technology of this government to improve services for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are still working on exactly how that will be allocated. So, as a placeholder, the financial accountant team, they've split that between Capital and Current because we don't yet have a confirmation of the mix between Capital and Current of where that money will be allocated.

We will be doing things like upgrading the mainframe systems, Microsoft 365, improving our cybersecurity, bringing in the Department of Education's IT, bringing in Housing's IT. We have a lot of important things that we're delivering. I'd like to say we have over one million vehicles renewals in MyGovNL, Mr. Speaker, and we're continually adding more and more services online.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I wish she could've shared that information last night, but anyway.

Speaker, the minister also referred to cybersecurity in several areas of Estimates.

What is the budget amount her department actually spends on cybersecurity purposes for government?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Cybersecurity is extremely important. I assure everyone in this province that cybersecurity is core of everything that every one of the IT staff in Government of Newfoundland and Labrador focus on. When they answer their emails, when we sign a contract, when we implement Microsoft 365, when we build a new system, when we implement a system, cybersecurity is part of all of that. It's not one person's job and not the other, it's everyone's responsibility.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

On April 23, the Minister of Health responded to my question on mental health crises in Labrador saying that there are services available, including a six-bed psychiatric unit in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. But this unit is not operational due to a lack of staff, so no help coming from there.

Will the minister admit that online and phone supports that he listed in his answer are not adequate to address critical mental health issues for Labrador?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question because it is an important question.

That six-bed unit was open, Mr. Speaker, because of human resource challenges closed it for a temporary period of time. It

will be reopening this spring. There are expanded services in Labrador, compared to two or three or four years ago. We look forward to continuing to expand those services.

There were many recommendations from the All-Party Committee previously in *Towards Recovery*. We have another all-party Committee in place. I look forward to those recommendations as well so that we can continue to build on the work that's already been done in mental health and addictions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Labrador was promised a psychosis nurse in last year's budget, but there are no signs of that position being filled. I've raised incidents of people in peril needing access to emergency mental health care, cases that 811 and Bridge the gapp cannot help.

Will the minister admit this government is not taking concrete action to help those needing critical mental health care?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That position is posted. We certainly hope to be able to fill that position, Mr. Speaker. But filling the position is based on finding an individual to fill that particular position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, schools in Central Newfoundland are being told not to send students to the pediatric clinic in Central Health for assessment because of a backlog. My colleague from Torngat Mountains just referenced the failure to open the six mental health beds in Labrador. We know there's a recruitment and retention crisis facing our health system. The Department of CSSD is short 105 social workers.

I ask the Minister of Housing: Where is the magic well of health care professionals that he plans to staff the comfort inn?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, since January, we have been working in step with End Homelessness St. John's, our community partners and the other support groups that are in the metro area and across the province, for that matter, because this is not an issue that's exclusive just to the St. John's metro region and we are aware of that, which is why we are making record investments in housing in Newfoundland and Labrador this year.

End Homelessness St. John's has put out a call for various workers, some of them social workers, some of them others. NL Health Services will be involved, CSSD will be involved. Mr. Speaker, we are approaching this full bore as a government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I didn't hear the source, I guess it's going to be staffed virtually.

Speaker, during Question Period of April 11, 2022, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development assured me that there were standards for shelters and housing owned and funded by Newfoundland and

Labrador Housing Corporation and privately run shelters.

Now a 46-page, heavily redacted ATIPP report this week stated that these shelter standards would not be completed until June 3, 2024.

I ask the minister: Were there or were there not standards in place or were they just simply a thought experiment like Schrödinger's Cat?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

P. PIKE: Mr. Speaker, we did have shelter standards in place, End Homelessness St. John's, the City of St. John's and Housing. Before a person would go into a housing unit there would be an inspection done. I said that in the House previously. It's something that is continuing.

We did have an outside group looking at shelter standards for us. I assumed and we assumed that would be completed by now, but if it's going to be completed in July or whenever, that's great. We'll move from there, but we are committed to putting in shelter standards as was mentioned by the NDP Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we see the need for mental health and addiction services are not being met in Labrador. I continue to hear from residents in Labrador West the need for timely access to addictions treatment.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to a treatment centre in Labrador for Labradorians?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member knows there is an All-Party Committee in place right now. We are speaking to stakeholders. We are speaking to others throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. Based on the last All-Party Committee and 54 recommendations being put forward, certainly that is something we can look at, Mr. Speaker. We look at any recommendations based on the All-Party Committee and based on stakeholder and other expert and people with lived experience providing information and advice to the All-Party Committee.

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Tourist Accommodations Act, Bill 75.

SPEAKER: Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is always an honour to rise in this House and bring the issues of the day forward on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The closure of the Canning Bridge in Marystown has had a devastating impact on the residents, fire and emergency services and the local economy.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure are well aware of the poor condition of the bridge and is committed to its replacement, most recently documented in a bridge inspection report completed in January of 2020, which confirmed the Canning Bridge was in poor condition.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately begin the process of the replacement of Canning Bridge.

The reason for the petition today, Speaker, is because I'd like to get an update from the minister and the department on what's going on with the baily bridge, what the timelines are toward getting the Canning Bridge replaced. Because right now there is really nothing in place to subsidize people for the overages and the costs and the cost of living is just astronomical down on the Burin Peninsula currently.

On this petition in particular, I have people from Beau Bois, people from Little Bay, I even have somebody from Harbour Mille that is in the district adjacent to Placentia West - Bellevue. You know, it affects them too because the Canning Bridge connects in the middle of town, it is very strategic where it was put and the town was built around it. Most of the residents are on the south side, they're the ones being impacted, but also

business and everything is being impacted on the other side.

The problem with it is we haven't seen any movement on any roadwork for Marine Drive, which is getting a lot more use. I'm sure this lady from Harbour Mille is coming up to visit maybe her loved one at the Marystown Retirement Centre. Again, that's adding to their costs of visiting friends but by not visiting them because of costs, it ends up creating more mental health issues for our seniors and our people that are a little bit more marginalized because of a fixed income.

It's gotten to the point now where we need an update, we need a timeline and we want to know this is moving forward. My understanding is that it's in the final engineering piece with the federal government, but that still doesn't give us really a timeline of when we're going to put this together and get this done, because the people of Marystown are hurting right now.

Something needs to happen. We're almost a year and a half into this bridge being condemned and shut down. After a year and a half, I would like to see some action. I would like to see either a GoBus, some work on the roads, a subsidy for taxis, but some way of getting our people in Marystown area, Beau Bois and Little Bay around.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: I present the following petition:

WHEREAS Canada already has stringent regulations and comprehensive legislation related to firearms ownership; Canada has millions of responsible, law-abiding firearms owners; data shows that the confiscation

regime would not stop firearms violence in Canada;

That the vast majority of firearms used in violent crimes are obtained illegally and/or are smuggled into Canada; that legal firearm owners in Canada are vetted on a daily basis through the CPIC system; that the list of firearms to be confiscated in the federal buy-back program is arbitrary and not based on functionality; that assault rifles or fully automatic firearms have been banned in Canada since 1977;

That criminals who have illegally obtained firearms will not be impacted by this confiscation regime; that the list of firearms to be confiscated includes some hunting rifles and shotguns, which can be expanded upon to include more firearms that are used for hunting purposes; the federal government is abandoning evidence-based decision-making as it relates to preventing firearm violence; and the list of firearms was legally obtained by licensed, law-abiding citizens and were never purchased from the federal government, thus rendering a buy-back program a moot cause.

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned call up the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador not to participate in a federal buy-back program that would entail the use of provincial resources, including but not limited to provincial law enforcement, provincial government agencies, and provincial office of the chief firearms officer.

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of people who have signed this petition. They would be, I guess, gun owners and hunter people that would be, say, members of the Rod and Gun Club and so on. As was indicated, they asked if I would present this petition to the House, it is really a federal matter in the sense that it's a federal program that are banning certain guns, including certain hunting rifles. That's really where the issue is.

As I said in the petition, I understand that the federal government are trying to make the city streets safer and so on. I don't think anybody would argue against that but, at the end of the day, the criminals who are going around with concealed weapons and these high-powered weapons and so on, assault rifles, they're not your regular law-abiding citizens. This here will also punish law-abiding citizens and gun owners.

Again, they are asking the government not to participate in this program.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Child Support Enforcement do a wonderful job with the approximately 5,000 files currently in our province. A regulation of this government allows a 30-day window for payment to be made to children who are often in single-parent homes. This window for payment creates hardships for the custodian, parent and child to make ends meet.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to review this 30-day window for payment regulation to assure this critically needed payment is received at the first of each month. This will allow single-parent families to pay rent, child care, food, et cetera, on a consistent basis.

I presented this petition twice previously, Mr. Speaker. We said in this House that we want to reduce childhood poverty. Of the approximately 5,000 files being looked at by our support enforcement officers, 4,482 of them have children in them. When the payments don't come in or they trickle over that 30-day regulatory time, those children and the parents of whom they're entrusted with have got to make decisions as to whether to pay rent, when to buy groceries, and that puts them in a very precarious spot.

If this government is intent on reducing childhood poverty, here's a suggestion for government: Pay these families with the children in them at the first of the month. As the money trickles in over the end of the month, it replenishes the money that you paid out.

At the first of the month, these single-parent families with children, can make sure that their children are fed, they haven't got the stress and their mental health about worrying whether they can make their monthly payment on time. It will create life and make it much easier – 4,492 children, let's look after them and it is not costing government any more money. It is just an operational issue.

I know that may be a little scary in some people's minds, with this current government, but here's one you can do that doesn't cost more money but will make sure that these children have food at the start of the money and their rent can be paid.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows: The section of road between Bay Bulls and the St. John's City limits is in need of major and forms a piece in the Irish Loop road highway system. This is the main throughfare for many residents who commute to work every day to St. John's and Mount Pearl from the Southern Shore.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic.

Speaker, I travel this every day, as well as the minister who lives in my district, he knows well what I'm talking about. This roadway serves as a primary route for various tourism attractions along the Southern Shore including the East Coast Trail, boat tours, lighthouse picnics, archaeological sites, ATV trails, whale watching, restaurants and everything else that happens on the shore. The communities of Witless Bay and Bay Bulls are growing areas. It's expected that the traffic flow will increase.

Now, driving back and forth there every day, and the minister knows, in the wintertime – as a matter of fact, when I haul out from where I live and come out onto the main stretch of highway, my ABS cuts in with the rut in the road, when I make a left turn. That's how bad it is with the ruts.

Now when the plows go there in the winter, they do a good job, but when the plow hits the pavement it can only hit the centre of the pavement where the tires are to, that's where all the snow and that's where all the water hangs up. It's very dangerous for the people driving on the roads.

It is something that should be looked at. Maybe they can recap it, I don't know. I'm not an engineer but there's something that needs to be done with that stretch of road.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is for improved inclusion of Northern Labrador communities to participate in Newfoundland and Labrador incentive/rebate programs.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who

urge our leaders to ensure that residents in Northern Labrador communities be given due consideration when the provincial government develops or develops in collaboration with others incentive programs, such as the Oil to Electric Incentive Rebate and also the residential rebate program, such as the Residential Construction Rebate Program.

The Oil to Electric Incentive program eligibility criteria is for: "All households in the province that are heated with fuel oil (minimum 1,000 litres per year), excluding households in communities with diesel electricity generation." This single criterion excludes all six communities in the District of Torngat Mountains.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that when developing provincial incentive/rebate programs, they make every effort to ensure that northern residents in the District of Torngat Mountains be not excluded due to factors such as the geographic location or lack of infrastructure, et cetera.

Speaker, I've been presenting this petition quite frequently. But the one thing I have to call upon is the fact that even though I voiced my concerns to the Minister of Justice, to the Minister of Labrador Affairs, to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change about our exclusion from province-wide rebate programs, we're still being excluded.

Now, first, I referenced the one for the construction rebate. But the problem with that was we couldn't access that rebate program because we didn't have access to the home builders that actually had that certification. In Northern Labrador, we couldn't access them. So we were excluded by that criterion.

Then when I look at the province-wide incentive program to help people get off oil heat and switch to electricity, we're

excluded right there in the actual eligibility of the document. So, for us, we're not being included.

I do want to thank the Minister of Labrador Affairs when I asked in Estimates she did say there was going to be a voucher for our elders. But, in actual fact, we would like to have full inclusion and be able to access rebate programs. That's why I keep continuing to present my petitions.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Residents on Route 350, 351 and 352 in the Exploits District are concerned of road conditions on these routes causing safety issues and damages to vehicles.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately have the roadwork to upgrade and improve conditions of these routes.

Speaker, I brought up this petition a number of times. I've been looking through the Roads Plan. We've been not making it on the Roads Plan to get a lot of work done in our district. We got one culvert, again, the year.

I did have a conversation with the minister. There are some portions of that route that are in really deplorable condition. I'm hoping that the minister will have those routes attended to and some roadwork done on those parts of the district, especially on Route 350, right now, that is causing grief to a lot of the constituents.

So if we could get some roadwork done in those areas, Speaker, that would alleviate some of the conditions of that road area at this time. We hope we'll get some attention out of those areas.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, to the three petitions that were dealing with Transportation and Infrastructure, just to let them know I am hearing what they are saying. We'll continue to review the needs of the districts when it comes to the highways and roads and when it comes to the Canning Bridge. We are working diligently on its replacement. We have a time frame in place. We have published that time frame and we are awaiting some approvals from the federal government. Once we have those, we're full steam ahead.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: We are now debating the main motion, Motion 1.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to actually speak on the budget. This is my first opportunity to speak on the budget. I've spoken on some amendments, actually, but one of the things I always talk about in this House is access to health care. I raise it in Question Period. I raise it in petitions because one of the things the people in Northern Labrador face is barriers

to be able to access adequate and timely health care.

Some of the issues I raised is access to medevac service when people are having a heart attack, when people are in serious crisis of actually dying and not being able to access a medevac service. A lot of times, those delays have nothing to do with weather – nothing to do with weather. We saw the failings where people were seriously hurt.

Some people, you know, when you look at it, you can't actually pinpoint, did that contribute to their untimely death? But, in actual fact, the residents in Northern Labrador know and it's not just about medevac, the delays in accessing a medevac service, just being able to access adequate health care. How many people do we have that talk about the fact that their loved one passed away from cancer, but then when they start to talk about the history of when they were diagnosed, they were diagnosed too late or they were improperly diagnosed.

I've got that petition, but it's changed recently with more signatures on it. One of the new things that is actually on that petition is talking about Makkovik. In the last so many years, the doctor has only come into Makkovik twice. So people can't actually access health care.

I was talking to a relative of mine that's had blood work done, that actually has a medical condition that's impacting their quality of life and they're being treated without actually sitting down and talking to a doctor. To me, that's alarming. So access to timely and adequate health care.

The other thing I talk about in this House of Assembly is how we're treated differently. In Northern Labrador, our six communities, we're treated unfairly, and I'll clarify that. In actual fact, if people in the rest of the province were treated that way and failed over and over again to properly access

health care, I think it would actually be addressed. But, in actual fact, we are not getting the services and the infrastructure that we need so that we can be well – wellness. I'm not talking about nutrition; I'm talking about being diagnosed with cancer, diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure, all of those things.

One of the incidents I talked about just recently that came to my attention and it was the son of a lady who actually presented at the clinic with symptoms of a stroke. Now –

(Disturbance.)

L. EVANS: The sound effects, that was quite shocking, the bells actually rang.

In actual fact, presented at the clinic with signs of a stroke. So normally you'd think that person would be medevacked out right away. No, that person wasn't medevaced right away. It was explained to the person, no, you're going to be medevaced tomorrow. Got signs of a stroke.

Now, there were two medevacs ahead of the person, so I guess there was triage. I don't know what kind of medical situation would be more in need of treatment than somebody who's presenting with stroke symptoms.

It was kind of ironic. Around that time, we were having the Minister of Health and his entourage there doing a presentation to media about the cardiac unit and all the services for cardiac care. One of the things they brought up – one of the people there that was speaking and talking about the importance of timely care and supports for stroke. Then they went on to actually describe the signs of stroke that spells out F-A-S-T.

She was going through it, taking up time for this important coverage. Then she said the reason why they want everyone to know the signs of stroke is so that you can access

care quickly. Because if you can get to a hospital, if you can get it recognized, you can get treatment. There's a window for you not to suffer damage from stroke or to actually help prevent the damage from stroke – four-hour window.

Now, in actual fact, we know the signs of stroke in Northern Labrador. We'll go to the clinic, but we'll be delayed if we can't actually get medevaced out to get that medication. We can't get medevaced out to get the supports. Also, to prevent another stroke. How many times do we have somebody with a stroke present at the hospital and then they'll say, okay, they're condition deteriorated, they had a few more strokes?

So, for me, access to timely medical care is so important, because for us it's life and death. Now what happened – I talked about it in the House. The next day they were going to be medevaced out because they were suffering from a stroke. What happened? The regular medical plane came to take people out for their doctors' appointments, for their treatment for their diagnosis. The regular plane – we refer to it as the mission plane or the schedevac – came and went in that community. So where was the medevac?

They found out that there was no medevac arranged. They failed to arrange the medevac the next day. Now, how crazy is that? How ridiculous is that? Do you know how that person got out to the hospital for their stroke? One of the people who was working with the regular airlines called and made arrangements so they could get on the passenger plane. The family was so grateful. They were so fortunate that this patient could get on the passenger plane, because normally the passenger plane is all booked up.

Now, in my budget speech, I could talk about access to travel, but for me I have to talk about access to health care. One of the things we're seeing now, a part of health

care, access to timely and adequate health care, is mental health. Where is the psychosis nurse?

Last year when I was speaking in the House about the suicides and the mental health issues, one of the things that was basically told to me is that help is on the way. In our budget, for Labrador, you will have a psychosis nurse. That was last budget. What am I doing here a year later? I'm basically presenting on this budget, the 2024 budget. So no psychosis nurse.

One of the things I said is the issues that contribute to suicide in my district, a lot of times it has nothing to do with psychosis. What contributes a lot to suicide is not having intergenerational trauma treated. Not having the supports. Not having the counselling. Not having the psychiatrist there. Not having the supports to help people get over their trauma, get over their pain.

But, in actual fact, we need that psychosis nurse because with not having intergenerational trauma treated, people do devolve into psychosis. When you are in psychosis, there's a break from reality, so you're more vulnerable. I experienced that first-hand in my district, people suffering from psychosis.

They'll show up at the clinic, but they can't get treatment. One lady I know actually paid her way to Goose Bay, because she wasn't getting the help and she went to emerg and she was turned away. I was talking to somebody with Nunatsiavut Health and Social Development. They had to help her get some temporary housing at the homeless shelter. That's what's happening when somebody has a complete break from reality.

Now, other than that person, no one is being harmed – well, the family is going through a lot of trauma, but what about people who are being harmed when they

have a break from reality, when they suffer psychosis?

I had a mother on the phone talking to me about her daughter and she said: My daughter has not undergone trauma, but she is suffering from psychosis. What that mother wanted was that mother wanted her daughter to be able to be properly diagnosed so they could begin treatment, so that she could get well again.

Because with some psychosis, like schizophrenia and other types of psychosis illnesses, if you get the proper treatment, you can actually have quality of life. You can live, you know, the life similar to what you had before psychosis entered your wellness, your body. The biggest problem with that is when people are failed. People are failed to access the health care.

For me, the intergenerational trauma is really something that's real. We look around our communities and we recognize it for what it is, and we call out for help. Family members now support loved ones who are going through trauma, who are experiencing mental health. So it's so important for us to be able to get treatment, but in actual fact that mother with the child who wanted to have proper diagnosis so that the child could get the medication and start on the road to recovery, they were stuck in their community.

Do you know what service were available to that child? A phone call from a counsellor. The mother said to the ER doctor, through the video conferencing: My daughter is not experiencing psychosis from trauma. She needs more than counselling. She wants to actually get her daughter diagnosed and treated and start the wellness.

So what happens when you don't get it? What happens when you don't get it? We see the effects when I talk a lot about suicide. Why do I talk a lot about suicide? Because our rates are so high. Actually, in the House of Assembly, when I was actually

rising on a point of order, I was very, very upset, I talked about the suicide rates in Labrador and I talked about the suicide rates for women, women in Nunatsiavut, compared to the rest of the province on the Island.

Because in actual fact, the suicide rate for women in Nunatsiavut is 31.5 times higher – more likely to commit suicide than a woman on the Island. When I was talking, I was so upset, I was so emotional, instead of saying times I said percentage. But do you know the difference between times and percentage? So 31.5 per cent is certainly different than 31.5 times because I think 31.5 times is 3,100 and something. I should have my calculator, but that's 3,000 per cent more likely to commit suicide.

How could I make that mistake? Because I was upset. So why am I upset? Do I know people who have committed suicide? Yes, I do. Am I related? Have I have a lost relatives? Have I lost loved ones? Yes, I have. I witness the harm done. In actual fact, I see the intergenerational trauma that continues on because it's not being addressed. One of the things that I talk about in this House of Assembly, about intergenerational trauma, is the only way that you're going to stop intergenerational trauma is by looking after the quality of life of people first.

In Northern Labrador, what impacts our quality of life? Access to food. People talk about, oh, we have to access nutritional food. For us in Northern Labrador, nutritional food is kind of pie in the sky if you want to buy it from the grocery store. We have difficulty actually being able to afford food. We looked at the food basket. We saw how much more expensive food is in Northern Labrador and then you look at the programs that are talked about. Every time I ask the question or got a petition, one of the things that's usually brought up is Nutrition North food subsidy. We learned what the problems with that are, in actual fact, it's not

working. It's not working to help us access nutritional food.

So quality of life, nutritional food for our elders, for our children, our most vulnerable parts of our population and then people on low income. People are working, working in stores, having a job, a full week, but at the end of the day, their low income doesn't go far enough. It's not only about accessing food. What about being able to heat your house? Every issue that impacts our quality of life I think I've got a petition on. The reason why I stand in the House of Assembly – and I said this before – is because when the House is sitting, government is sitting right across from me so they can't say they don't know about it when I got my petitions. When I read my petitions that talk about the cost to heat your house. Everybody knows now that the cost of oil for a furnace to heat your house in Northern Labrador is much more and it's really impacting the people because Northern Labrador is colder, colder than other regions of the province.

So what impacts your mental health? What impacts your quality of life? What impacts your overall wellness? If your house is cold.

So to adequately heat your house, we don't usually deal in volume of a tank outside of a house, the 1,000-litre tank outside your house, we deal in drums, a 200-litre drum, you burn two to four drums. What it is, is \$500 for that drum. This is in one month.

I mention quite frequently, because of my credibility, I have to say: This is not my words. I talked to the AngajukKâk in Makkovik before I actually presented the petition to talk about the cost of oil because I wanted him to send me an email and, yes, you can burn up to a drum a week. That's four drums in one month if you want to heat your house adequately.

Now what's the problem with that? People have done it. People have always done it, that's what they burn, two to four drums a

month. The problem is last winter a drum cost you \$500. So you had to pay between \$1,000 and \$2,000 to heat your house and people can't afford that.

Even if you have a good paying job – and I've said it to people here in the House when I was presenting my petition – imagine if you had to pay between \$1,000 to \$2,000 to heat your house. What's going to happen, you're not going to do it. Even people with good paying jobs, a lot of times they have to turn down the thermostat and overnight the house gets cold.

For me, these are the concerns: quality of health. So what's presented to us?

Listening to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, climate change is a big thing now. They want everybody off oil and use electricity. Where's the electricity coming from? Most of it is coming from Labrador, but can we access the incentive program that switches off, because a lot of people said: Lela, we can't afford oil anymore.

I've seen it, people going down and instead of a drum, a 200-litre barrel to fill up, they're taking down the 25 litre, those little red jerry cans and if you're lucky enough to be able to get a yellow one, so that you don't get your gas and your oil mixed up, 25 litres. People are now using that to try and heat their houses, taking that back, putting it in the tank.

But for me, everything is about quality of life and about services. I talk about that. Really, we're in the age of reconciliation. To me, it's really, really difficult.

There are other things that I'd like to talk about, too. It's so important. Houses – your ability to afford a house, your ability to build a house. But even if you have a house, how do you maintain your house? How do you keep your house in repair when you can't actually go down to the store and buy building materials or paint?

In actual fact, the services, transportation – I haven't even started on transportation. That freight boat that we lost from the Island really only benefits the businesses in Goose Bay. Because now the prices that they charge for food has gone up. The prices they charge for building materials have gone up. The price they charge for goods and services –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Should I take a bow?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As always, it's a pleasure to stand here and speak in representing the people of the great District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

Well, let me begin, this time of year is always a good time of year for hockey fans. But I will say I just got a notification that Bob Cole passed away at 90 years old. So I send along condolences to his family. We all know what his voice meant to hockey. He was a great –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: As he used to say: Oh, baby! That used to put chills over your body. Certainly, a loss for the province because we were proud to know that someone at a national stage was calling hockey games around the world that was blood of Newfoundland and Labrador. We're certainly proud of that, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, I'll touch on the Budget Speech before I get into my district issues and I call out some accomplishments. I want to recognize the Finance Minister for doing

a fabulous job. I believe the province is in good hands, from a delivery of programs to you have the financial responsibility on the other side. I believe she's striking a real balance for the people of this province. I believe the people of the province recognize that. Because you budget today for tomorrow. It's a challenge in this province, there's no doubt it. No matter who's sitting in that chair, it is certainly a balance.

So, Mr. Speaker, just to go to my district that I'm extremely proud to represent from many levels. Last Thursday night – I did a Member's statement on it yesterday, of the unveiling of a documentary called *The Forgotten Warriors*. It happened in Conne River. It was a very big showing of support from the community of what it represented and it was a night of lots of emotions, because you watch, you hear those that survived and those that are no longer with us, but still have family members around and still heartbroken that they weren't there to see this unveiling of the documentary.

When I say emotions, I said to Chief Mi'sel Joe during the documentary that when they say we were willing to die for our justice – and it wasn't just words, they were willing to die for what they believed in. When he said he called home to his mom to tell her that your five boys may not be coming home, it resonated with me. I'm the youngest of nine children but I'm also the youngest of five boys. If I had to call my mom and tell her that your five boys are not coming home, that's her world.

It was a proud moment, very proud for all of us and for everyone who will watch it as well, because I made a commitment to those that were the room that I'm going to sit down and watch the documentary with my children who – and I don't mind saying, I even apologized to them that night because I live just down the road from Conne River. We weren't taught in schools of the way they lived or the challenges that they faced. I apologized for that because we should have known.

We should know today. It should be in our schools with more focus on it. It was a great evening, great music. The talents from many that were there – CBC were there. It was covered very well and I encourage everybody to certainly watch it and you will find a lot of meaning from it.

I mention Marilyn John because she was kind of the negotiator at the table. She was firm on what she believed in: We're not going home until we get what we want. They got what they wanted through, unfortunately, a hunger strike and, you know, even in the documentary I say emotions, but there is a little bit of laughter as well because those nine people who went there, locked themselves in a minister's office with no ill intent, they just wanted to get justice. They even told me that a police officer came through the wall. They took down partitions on the other side to get access to them because it was all about safety. We all recognize that.

Again, it was a great evening and, please, watch it and I'm sure that you will not be disappointed in what I'm saying here. It will strike you the same way as it did me. I say congratulations to Marilyn John, Chief Mi'sel Joe and everybody that was there and the new chief as well, which is a young man. There were a lot of young people there and it was good to see. They've certainly incorporated as I talked to Marilyn John – she works at the school now and they're incorporating it into their school and their curriculum.

That's very important. In terms of district, I always try to talk about volunteers and we have volunteers on many levels from fire departments to whatever is their responsibility. Lions Clubs: We have many people that devote hours upon hours upon hours of volunteer time for their community and I say to them thank you. We can't thank them enough and I know every Member would feel the same way and issue those same thank yous.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the district, the health care as well, I want to say thank you to the nurses, the nurse practitioners, the LPNs, doctors, virtual care. Virtual care has been accepted in my district very well. There are still challenges because I think the older folk, at one point, realized virtual care – well, I'm never going to get to see a doctor anymore. That's not the case. Virtual care is now modern-day delivery of health care and not just here in the province, but in Canada and around the world. It is a tool to deliver health care.

In talking about nurses, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that my daughter will be graduating this year as a nurse and will be working in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: And I will have the honour of being on stage when she gets her diploma.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: A little bit emotional for me because my dad passed away last summer and he said you will make a fabulous nurse, but he said I hope I'll live long enough to see if you care for me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, that goes to the heart of it all, doesn't it. Really, at the end of the day, it goes to the heart of it all. So I want to say congratulations to those who make health care happen in different parts of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the fishery in my district. Maybe before I get to that, I'll talk about what we saw a several weeks here in the province, which was a real struggle. We heard it from harvesters, we heard it from all sides. We heard it from fish plant workers, which I said right at the beginning, coming from a small rural community where I had sisters working in

the fish plant and realize how hard they worked day after day, standing on the cold floors, that always stands in your mind in terms of when you're trying to make decisions of those that still work in those fish plants. A lot of them are not 20- and 30-year-olds. They do hard work because harvesters bring in the fish, they process it. There are processors, but the processors are the fish plant people that do the work. I want to say thank you to them, too.

During the discussions, they were difficult, but you try to strike a balance in terms of the harvesters. I said it here when I was being questioned, I realize there was a lot of emotions, but if you try to take the emotions out of it, try to have good conversations, I think you can get where you need to go. I think the decisions that we made, in terms of outside buyers, we increased the capacity, we issued a new licence. Those decisions don't bring the benefits, not overnight as such, Mr. Speaker, but they will in the long term.

I think good things are happening and I know my colleague behind me who's pretty delved into the fishery from many aspects of her personal life and her professional life, we talk on a daily basis and she sees the challenges, as it's been very good mentor for me as well in the decisions that we should be looking at. That's important and I want to recognize her, and there are others on the other side as well that we have conversations and they don't go unnoticed or that I don't listen to them, Mr. Speaker.

I think good things are happening in the fishery. There will always be struggles and, certainly, I recognize again the tragedy this past weekend to that family, to that community. The sea takes and has taken too many lives. We realize the struggles that community will go through and the family, the young families, it's unimaginable what pain they're feeling. Our hearts and prayers and thoughts go out to them. As they say, time will heal wounds, but you'll never forget

the loss that happened this past weekend in Lark Harbour.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, I know the fishery is highlighted as such, but there are bigger pieces in the department that I think are not often talked about but should be talked about. I know there are outdoor enthusiasts on the other side and on this side.

I attended in Gander this weekend, Friday night and Saturday morning, a great display from the Newfoundland and Labrador Outfitters Association. I spoke to them Friday night and saying to them that we don't recognize this industry enough. Because I've had many conversations with people that will say, well, the Outfitters Association, you're issuing licences to Americans to come in and shoot animals that we don't have access to. I said, you need to educate yourself about that industry, though. Americans can come in and pay upwards of \$60,000 for one shot – the opportunity. Those returns employ Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, a lot of them. They told me at that meeting that in terms of a dollar figure attached to it, you can be anywhere from \$60 million to \$100 million in this province. That's a lot of money and that's a big contributor to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I certainly told them that I will do my best in terms of supporting them, recognizing it more, talk about it more. At the trade show you see these side industries, because I always talk about aquaculture that the side industry is huge, millions and millions of dollars. So is this industry. Every toy in the book was on the floor of the arena in Gander Saturday morning.

People use these machines for their industry, whether it's recreational or commercial, whatever the case may be. They're buying those boats from probably Grand Falls or Gander, whatever the case may be. So there's somebody working in

that store. Those supports are very important.

We had enforcement officers there that I chatted with, provincial forestry officers as well. We know how important they are to this province. We were in Estimates the other day and the Member for Exploits talked about, and I know it's important to him, too, because we witnessed the fire in Central and it affected all of us. We recognize the importance those officers play to the survival of the province.

This year, we hope for a good year in terms of – we pray for rain, but we realize even now out on the west part of the country where there are fires already on going right now and challenges there. We hope for a good year from this province's perspective, but I believe we are prepared.

There are discussions on going on how we can increase our resources because I believe there are a lot of young people that would like to be employed in this area and I know some that are interested so I encourage them.

As I said, it was certainly a pleasure to attend that tradeshow from the Newfoundland and Labrador Outfitters Association. Also, Barry Fordham was there, he does great work in terms of the sharing program and – I think that was the name of it – yes, Sharing the Harvest NL. He was in the glossy book that they had this weekend, which was very impressive. I'd like to thank the president, Brad LeDrew and, certainly, the executive director, Cory Foster. They've done tremendous work. And there are others as well that make this happen. A very nice magazine, I could table it I suppose. No props? We'll this is worth propping, Mr. Speaker. If anybody wants to see the magazine, they could certainly do that.

To continue on in the department and what we do as a department, there's the agriculture piece. I spoke yesterday to the

Chicken Farmers AGM. It was a good event, but, again, another industry that I feel needs more recognition. I mean, in eggs, milk and chicken, we're 100 per cent self sufficient. That's important. That's important to this province. Support for farmers, I believe it's crucial. We're at a juncture where we need to support farmers in this province and we will, because we realize climate change is real. We get product in the province by boat and we realize the challenges there, so the more that we can do, the better.

There's lots happening in this province from a growing perspective, whether it's broccoli or potatoes. There's a lot happening, but there's more that we can do in order to be, I guess, reliant on Newfoundland and Labrador. We can certainly get there, Mr. Speaker.

Let me end off, I guess, with Crown lands. We all know that we're anxiously awaiting – and I don't say stay tuned to be disrespectful of the ask from the other side because we want to move on with it as well. So it will be coming to the floor of this House. I look forward to the debate.

I've always said the challenges around it is – and that will require, I guess, during debate as well because we all have cases in the province and they all bring different challenges. So we're trying to move forward to ensure that it helps the most of Newfoundland and Labrador that it can. So that's the aim, that's the goal and that's why it will be important for me to bring it to this floor. I'll look forward to the debate and the questions that will come from it and look forward to that.

I will end on one thing that was certainly brought to the floor by the Member for Grand Falls -Windsor- Buchans and that was the Rocky Brook Bridge. The question was asked by the Member for Exploits – and I'm glad that he did bring it to the floor because it's important. I was out on a call when the Member was standing. In terms of

questioning, in terms of government, the department and what we are doing, there are options. In terms of a meeting, I think that the Member might have said we haven't met and all that stuff. We've met on several occasions, over the phone.

I've made a commitment that I will meet with them, but I've also made it clear that the solution is going to be significant dollars. So I'm not saying that government would not be at the table, we will be at the table, if the other side is willing to – because the bridge now, years ago, it was a need for us because for departmental purposes. It's no longer needed for departmental purposes.

So we have people who are cabin owners in there and people live there, we recognize that. We are not dismissing it. We will be at the table, but someone has to take responsibility of whatever is going to be put there. That's the discussion that needs to happen. I'm not brushing it aside; I know it's important. We've discussed it several times over the phone, and I know both Members have asked about it. I will be meeting with them. I made the commitment and I stand by that commitment.

In terms of the options, I think the other side knows where we are. So we'll continue that dialogue and hopefully come to a resolution that will be good for all sides.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is always an honour and a privilege to stand in the House of Assembly and speak to and for my constituents in the District of Terra Nova.

Just before I stood up, my hon. colleague from Bonavista said I should try and be nice, so I think I'm going to do that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: From the gallery over there.

A couple of years ago when we were in this House, right around Remembrance Day, there was a private Member's motion made and it had to do with our National War Memorial on Duckworth Street. Part of that was about the refurbishment and restoration of what will be a 100-year-old monument this year. As a veteran, very near and dear to me. I

In recent weeks, I have received an invitation from the Premier and I know that someone will probably say I'm not allowed to say their names, but I'm going to say anyhow and I'll apologize after the fact. So Premier Furey and Minister Crocker sent me an invitation to go with them to France for the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: As a veteran, as a Member of the House of Assembly and as a human being, I would like to say thank you but I'll also say it's one of the greatest honours that I can partake in and I think it speaks volumes here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I guess that means I don't have to apologize.

It goes to show we do things right in this House and I think that's one of them, so my heartfelt thanks.

This session, there have been lots of ups and downs and there's been people upset in the House and questions asked that are tough and questions asked that people don't want to ask, debate on the budget – not necessarily accusations, but what happens

as people believe one thing or another and they speak about it loudly and people get offended or they get heated. That's just what happens in here, but the reality of it is the people that come here, all 40 of us, come here with, I believe, a singular goal and that goal was to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We don't always achieve it collectively, but I do believe as a collective inside this House we all feel that way and I think it's very important to put that out there.

I want to talk about health care. I'll try and be nice about it. There are some things that I think need to be said that, I don't know if they're misleading but I think they're misunderstood. So recently, government has talked about the 50,000 patients that are rostered for community care clinics through Teladoc and through – you have to register in order to take part. That registration process is a little bit convoluted and I think sometimes it's overlooked.

I'll say, in my instance, I have people in my district who in the past were split between Eastern and Central Health. If you go to Charlottetown, you come under Central; if you're east of Charlottetown, you come under Eastern. I've got pretty much the whole community of Charlottetown who receive their health care in Clarenville, most of them born in Clarenville, who tried to register and they're being told, no, no, you have to register for Gander. That kind of stuff doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.

I guess here's what really doesn't make sense to me, is that all the people that were rostered – and "rostered" is the key word, and I'd love for the Minister of Health stand up and explain this – 50,000 people rostered. But what the public doesn't understand is that doesn't mean 50,000 people are going to be a part of a community care clinic. It means that a portion of those people will have the ability to attend walk-in clinics.

The numbers I'm hearing in the Avalon area are somewhere around 11,000 of those 50,000 patients aren't a member of a clinic. When you leave the Avalon and you come out around the Clarenville area, I'm being told somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500 of the patients out there that are rostered aren't a member of that clinic. They're not registered as a patient for that clinic. But they have the ability to walk in during the walk-in period times to those clinics.

Those clinics aren't necessarily staffed. But here's what bothers me about it. The ability for them to go to a walk-in clinic is a big deal. They don't necessarily have that ability now. So is it a step forward? It's absolutely a step forward. But is it misleading? One hundred per cent. Because I don't think anyone in this House of Assembly, including the previous minister of Health, the current Minister of Health, will argue the fact that the biggest problem facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians today is continual care. If I go to a doctor and I get a cancer diagnosis or it could be Parkinson's, it could be any number of things that you could be diagnosed with that requires continual care.

Well, the fact that somebody is rostered in a community care clinic doesn't mean that they have the ability to receive continual care. If you think that the doctors that are involved in this aren't scared or talking about it, they are. I've heard from numerous doctor who have said it's shameful how misleading this is.

Now, I would love to hear the full story on it, but if we're putting out that there are 50,000 people that now are part of a community care clinic and the real numbers are in the 30,000 range, then I think it needs clarification. Because if all 50,000 of those people who are rostered aren't going to receive the same level of care, I think it's deceitful and I think it's very misleading for government to put that out publicly. It's all over Facebook. It's been all over everywhere and the doctors that I know are

telling me that that's not the case. I suspect that it's not the case based on they'd have no reason to tell me anything any different than that.

The continual care portion of things, it's no different than a senior not being able to get a driver's licence or someone going to emerg and getting a diagnosis or getting their blood work done and there's nowhere to send it after. So if that's what we're going to do with our continual care clinics and that's how we're going to treat a portion of the patients that have been rostered to them, I think we have a big problem.

The other thing I'll say, and we brought it up here in the House of Assembly a while ago was, I know out my way the community care clinic that's been announced and touted and photo ops and all that good stuff isn't fully staffed. We don't have a doctor there. I think that's likewise anywhere you go.

Again, I'm not saying that the attempts to get these doctors aren't taking place. I'm not saying that we're not trying to recruit and retain physicians and all levels of nursing staff, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, everyone we need, but I don't think it does us well to mislead the public into a false sense of security thinking because they've been rostered that they now have a family physician. You will have a two-to-three-year wait period after you're rostered to get in there.

Listen, in my District of Terra Nova, I have a lot of people who they haven't registered through Teladoc because they don't know they have to. First of is, we're telling people that they have to register online and they don't have online capabilities.

We're trying to sell something to a group of people who (a) don't understand and (b) don't have the ability to do it because they just don't have computers. They don't have Internet. They don't have the knowledge to use them.

The next thing I'll say is today in Question Period when we talk about virtual care – and, listen, the previous speaker, the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, he's not wrong when he talked about virtual care. It's a key component of how we move things forward, no question about it. But all things aren't equal. While I'll agree that you can make a phone call and a phone call is absolutely a part of virtual care, but if you live in rural Newfoundland, or I'll do you one better, you're 60, 70 years old, you're living in a long-term care facility and your doctor's appointment is virtual care. The first thing is these residents that live in these long-term care facilities or personal care homes, in specific, they don't all have phones in their room. So they don't have the privacy to go do that. Some of them don't have access to computers so they certainly can't do it that way.

I just think it sounds good and it's how we're putting it out there, but there are lots of instances – and I said it the last time I spoke, we live in Newfoundland and Labrador. We live in a province that has 402,000 square kilometres, 521,000 people. We have a geography issue. We certainly have a population issue. If you look at rural Newfoundland, they don't have the same abilities and the same options to access some of the stuff that we're putting out. It's just not there.

It's funny, I just thanked the Premier and the Minister of Tourism about this trip. I'll give you a story about this trip. When I got the invitation, I immediately went to find my passport and couldn't find it. I couldn't find my passport. I knew what was going to happen. I was going to receive a phone call, there's going to be a military flight, they're going to want my passport, my previous (inaudible), I knew exactly.

When I went to refile for my passport they said: No, it's lost, so you've got to report it as stolen or lost. So I did that. Then when I did my renewal and I went in, they said: We can't do a renewal because it's lost, you

have to do a primary application. I said: Can I do that right here? She said: You need your birth certificate. I said: My birth certificate is with my passport, so I didn't have a birth certificate.

Now, they're in a rush to get this. My office is directly next door to Service NL. So I walk over and I said: I'm here to get a birth certificate. The same thing that you could do before. When I went in, they said: We can't do that here. I said: What do you mean? They said: The only place in all of Newfoundland where you can get your birth certificate is in Mount Pearl. There's one location for the whole Island.

I'll back up now. Imagine you're a cancer patient in Labrador West or Goose Bay or somewhere and your dying wish is to get married to a loved one. You've got to have a birth certificate in order to get a marriage certificate and you want to get married in four days, five days; you got a week or two to live. You can't get it. You can't do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: You check.

Now I'm going to say something good about the department, just give me a second. You can apply online, but there's no urgent process that you can get it. If you apply online, they tell you it's a five-to seven-day workday period in order to get it and then they'll put it in the mail in those five to seven days. You can go online, it's all there. So you apply and you do it, you got to wait two weeks.

But what I'm getting at is that if you're a senior and you're living in rural Newfoundland and you drive to Clarenville, Gander, Grand Falls or Corner Brook, anywhere where these centres are, it was only a couple of years ago, you could walk in with your ID and you could get your birth certificate easy enough. We've taken that away from rural Newfoundland.

So forget about that assumption. Now, remember that if you go to Petley or St. Jones Within or Gooseberry Cove in my district – and I'm sure other people have the same things – there's no Internet, people don't have access to it. So now they're left to apply online. But if you go to Service NL in Clarenville and you ask them if you can apply for a birth certificate, I can tell you what they're going to tell you: No, we don't do it here. You got to do it online or you got to go to St. John's.

So when we talk about virtual care and we talk about services and we talk about how we treat our seniors, how we talk about rural Newfoundland, all things aren't always equal. That's why I say all the time. We need to put a rural lens on legislation and how we make up rules for how we're doing things.

I'm not saying that to be negative, I'm not saying that to push back on any department, but what I am saying is how things operate on the Avalon or in the larger centres is not how they operate in the rest of Newfoundland and people don't have those accesses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I got my birth certificate and I'll say to the minister, I sent it in electronically, I reached out to the department, I explained to them the situation and it got put in the mail pretty quick. But it's because I had the wherewithal to do it. I'm sure that if someone were to call my office, I could still get the exact same results for an individual.

But, again, all individuals aren't equal. Their first reaction would be to go to the Service NL site while they're up in Clarenville on Wednesday when they got their cheque or in Gander and that's where they'd go to do it and that's where they'd get it.

Those types of services are easy. Why not walk in, do your application and even if it

has to be mailed out from St. John's, then it can be done, but you cannot apply for it in those offices.

I talk about the roads here quite a bit and I cornered the minister today to talk about St. Brendan's, dirt road on an island, it's difficult to do stuff out there. They're in desperate need of some Class A and some grading. The grading that's gone on over the last few years has been specifically that, grading of no material and over time when you don't put new materials down, you tear the road up.

If you go to Random Island or Southwest Arm, Eastport Peninsula, out around the Hillview area, St. Jones, the roads are terrible. Now, I got no facade about the roads in rural, they're terrible in a lot of different places. There is no question about it.

I said here the other day, what I do have a problem with is the lack of maintenance that happens. I don't know what happens when summertime comes, but it's as if some of the staff disappear and the maintenance doesn't happen. I always refer back to my grandfather, who was a superintendent with Transportation and Works in Clarendville for 43 years, and I can tell you that if he seen the conditions of the roads there now, he'd be rolling over in his grave.

We go and we put cold patch down at the end of the year. Last year, the whole argument was that there was no hot patch, there was no hot patch, when one of the largest road builders in the province is there with their plant going most of the summer. I don't know why we're not utilizing those tools and assets while we're there to get better results. We go out and we fix potholes in standing water, and I can tell you right now, our own specs say we're not allowed to do that, yet our own employees go out and do that.

We patch potholes when there is water in it. We don't apply any kind of tar. We don't do

any of the things that we're supposed to do and the same department that is supposed to enforce it, doesn't do it when they're doing the work. It is mind blowing to me.

We talked about nurses today and, in particular, nurses that are in private practice. In reality, it is a private practice, but they're not trying to privatize health care. They're trying to provide a practice and help people and be paid. The minister stood on his feet and he said that is there.

We asked the question last week about the driver's licences for people over 75 years old, which by the way I think the whole idea, if we call someone a senior and you're a senior at 65, then you're a senior at 65. You shouldn't be a senior at 65 and then more of a senior at 75. For some reason, that's how we're doing things.

If you're 75 years old and you need to renew your driver's licence and you don't have a family doctor, you have to pay. The minister said, oh no, they can send it in. When he was asked, he doesn't know where we have to send it to. Service NL doesn't know where we've got to send it to. Service NL says it's a process that the health care system has. The health care system says it used to be Service NL. They're not sure how it works.

Listen, when you're 75 years old and the only little bit of freedom you have is that driver's licence, when your independence depends on your ability to drive from your home to get your groceries, to cash your cheque or do whatever, you need it and you need access and you need help. Why there's confusion around that, it makes no sense.

Here's the other thing I'll say is that if the minister was right in what he said and he said services are paid for and we can do that and then he corrected himself, well, for driver's licences we can do it. Well, if we can do it for driver's licences, we can do it for everything. If you don't have a family

physician and you have to go see a practical nurse, then it should be paid for. It should be.

Whether it's a stopgap measure until we get our health care up and running the way it should be or not, it's something that should be happening right now, given the turmoil that we're in. There's no question about it.

Carbon tax: We talk about carbon tax and, of course, there's lots of banter, federal, provincial. It was okay when it was going in your pockets. Now you don't want it. Blah blah blah blah.

I asked the question last night in Estimates – and I think it's an important question and I would love to know what we, as a province, pay in carbon tax when it comes to our own intergovernmental affairs; what we're paying for mileage; what we're paying for our vehicles when they're on the road; what we're paying for our thermal generation plants; what we're paying as a whole for carbon taxes in this province, because we don't get the rebates.

So it would be an interesting fact to understand exactly how much carbon tax costs us as a province and I'm sure that number is out there somewhere because every ounce of fuel that goes into a vehicle, everything is accounted for, I would hope so. I would hope it's accounted for, but depending, maybe that's just the budget process as was quoted last night. I don't know, it's just the budget process. We'll see.

Mental health: I talked last week about a couple of instances that happened, in particular, in my district. But everywhere you go throughout this province and you talk to people about mental health, you see it in their eyes. You can't talk to anyone. There's nobody in this room – mental health to me right now is exactly like cancer. There's nobody in this House of Assembly who isn't touched, hurt, affected or hasn't experienced an issue with mental health.

The reality of it is that when they need help, it's not always there. I can remember the previous minister said, people come, we've expanded our processes and people can get in. You can get in the first time; I don't dispute that. If you have an issue and you need to see or speak to someone, there are services out there when you get in and see someone. But once that one visit happens, you're on your own. If you need continual care, if you need a psychologist, a psychiatrist, if you need to go to the Janeway, the Waterford, try it, I dare you. You're not getting in.

The bottom line is these are people that are so down and out and need help. If you have an individual who's at the end of the rope and they're even contemplating – forget about attempt, but contemplating taking their own life, think about that. Think about where you are in your life if you're considering suicide over living. Then remember that if you call a suicide line – and I'll say, call 811 and try it. For the people in here that will say oh, 811 is wonderful, pick up the phone make a phone call.

When you're down and out and you're at your last moment and you're talking about taking your own life, you pick up the phone and call 811 and see what happens. You may get put on hold. You're going to have to wait a long time to get through to whoever. You may get pushed around to talk to someone different, but the services just aren't there.

It's okay, like everything else we do, to have the idea, but those ideas are no good unless we push them past the finish line and make sure that people are able to access the services they need.

Anyhow, Madam Speaker, my time is coming to an end. It's a pleasure to stand and speak on the budget and I guess this will be the last time I speak on the budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh): The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

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

I might take a moment just to depart from the general themes that we've heard fairly persistently from one side of the House. I think I'll start by looking at a kind of bigger picture. One of the hidden bits in the Minister of Finance's Budget Speech related to economic indicators for this province as compared with others and trends.

One of the things that kind of got glossed over and certainly has not been mentioned from the other side is the direction these indicators are going. Our unemployment rate has fallen and our engagement in the workforce has risen. There are improvements in GDP and overall a pretty positive trend. We've seen a significant growth in population and Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills is to be congratulated on that.

I think the other thing which I have heard from other sources is much more behind the scenes. Whilst it's mentioned as part of the Minister of Finance's strategic pillars, I really don't think our Minister of Finance has been given the credit that others outside and others in the finance world have given her. She and her team, over the last three years, have completely revamped the way debt is managed in this province.

You might say, so what? Well, they've taken advantage of variations in lending rates and borrowing rates. They have refinanced loans and they have done it in such a way that our debt servicing costs have not seen the huge spike that you would expect from an interest rate that went, in four years, from 1.5 per cent to 11 per cent some jurisdictions. The bond-rating agencies have really quite happy to praise her up – not just

here, but as an example of how other jurisdictions can do it.

I think I'd just like to put that on the record here that the indicators are going the right way. There is a light at the end of the tunnel. Contrary to the stories from the other side, it's not the train coming to hit you. The minister and her team have done an extremely good job of finding money in places where you would not have expected to be able to do it.

We're still saddled with debt and you bring that up in the House and it's a sensitive subject. The facts of the case, it is what it is. It was something we were locked into and contrary to recent discussions, I believe this government has done not just a creditable but an excellent job of managing our way out of that. Not only to keep the debt under control, but also to keep utility prices under control for the people of this province. Without those manoeuvres and without those mechanisms in place, the cost of living rises would have been truly staggeringly awful.

The move to Municipal and Provincial Affairs was an exciting one for me. I hadn't spent much time in municipal governance and, really, it was a new area for me. As such, it's been a fascinating learning curve. I'd like to thank the staff in the department for their tolerance in repeating things to me that probably they live with every day and regard as taken for granted.

It is a small but mighty department; it is the link between two jurisdictions of government. Despite what high school curriculum might teach, people come away with the idea that somehow there's a hierarchy of government in this country because we're a Confederation. Nothing can be further from the truth.

There is no way that the federal government can tell us what to do in areas of sole provincial jurisdiction. Equally, we can't tell the federal government what to do in areas

of sole federal jurisdiction. So, for example, the discussion we have here about the carbon tax is moot because we're all on the same page: It's not the right thing. We shouldn't be having it. The facts are that there are then areas of shared jurisdiction; health is one, education is not, for example, and I speak of those from personal previous experience.

Similarly, the level of municipal governance is not subservient to provincial government. Certainly, those of you who were involved in the debates around the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* will see very clearly that there is an area of jurisdiction that is carved out within a provincial framework, but is solely municipal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: We had our departmental Estimates this morning and I have to say it was actually very enjoyable; the questions from the other side were interesting. There was no unpleasantness about it at all. It was an exchange of facts and policy. I'd like to thank the Members who sat on that Committee for their approach. I appreciate it.

I think specific to this budget I would like to highlight just a couple of things. The total budget of the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is not actually even as great as that of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program from the Department of Health; it is a small budget.

Municipal Operating Grants this year have once again increased. That was prearranged, as it were, on a two-year scale. So whilst it's only a 12 per cent between this year and last year, over the course of the two years, it's actually a 27 per cent compound interest.

The Municipal Operating Grants are again, contrary to some view, a supplement to municipal revenues. They are not a substitute. There's been this significant increase, so we hope that will increase the fiscal capacity of the recipients.

The other items in the budget, there was specifically, although it runs through Fire and Emergency Services, money for fire departments who respond to calls for aid outside their municipal boundaries. Something which is legislatively allowed and governed through the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, but essentially runs on operational levels through Fire and Emergency Services.

My own bailiwick, we have increased significantly the budget for training for councillors. That was something we heard very clearly from Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador as well as the Professional Municipal Administrators Association.

It is our intent to use this to upskill staff and elected within municipalities to better enable them to take advantage of pre-existing programs, because sometimes they can't because their financial skills are lacking, their staff are new and there's always a turnover of councillors, even between the regular municipal elections.

I look forward again to co-operating with both PMA and MNL over the coming year. We've had a great relationship since I took office and, indeed, I think I built on the successes of my predecessor. As I referenced in a Ministerial Statement here in the House a couple of weeks ago, my buddy, the late Derrick, we have come to an arrangement with PMA, of which Derrick was very much a part over the years, and look forward to bringing forth the criteria for the leadership award to remember him as well as going to the arts community to look for a suitable token that we can present to winners.

MNL spring symposium is coming up in the beautiful District of Gander. It would otherwise have been in Corner Brook but there were some issues with accommodation.

This year sees the provincial and territorial meeting of ministers of local government meeting again. This will be my first ministerial FPT since before COVID, when I actually wasn't sort of allowed to leave the province.

Just for the point of view of those who were interested in the travel budget, it's in the scenic City of St. John's so I get to travel just down the road. But still, you've got to start somewhere.

AN HON. MEMBER: Pedal bike (inaudible).

J. HAGGIE: Yeah, I'm thinking of an e-bike. I'm getting a bit old for peddling, particularly up Barter's Hill.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's all downhill.

J. HAGGIE: Only if you head to the water. Haggie's rule of ports is if you face away from the water and walk, you are, by definition, going uphill and it's not failed me yet.

Thanks very much. I apologize for the tickling throat.

The department's role really is a link, it's a conduit between the provincial programs and the municipalities, but the biggest part of the department outside of budget is municipal support. We have a marvellous director, Chris; we have regional directors who are extremely good. They're all very plugged in to their communities in Western and Labrador, Central and Eastern.

Always happy to take a call from a town clerk or a mayor or a councillor on any issue little or small. We try and monitor those discussions to see if there are themes that

we need to address more formally through either circulars or online learning.

The *Municipal Conduct Act*, which was the child of my predecessor shall we say, went over very smoothly. The training approach that we adopted we're going to clone for the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*. Those regulations we expect to be proclaimed probably in time for calendar 2025. We need that time to do that training and education so that it comes as no surprise to anybody.

Gander is a lovely district. It's probably one of if not the most compact rural district; I can drive from one end of it through every community to the other end in, I would say, 55 minutes. Certainly not the case when you go staggering around places like Fogo Island - Cape Freels or Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, because they are much more scattered.

My own district is in an interesting state of flux. We have a very long history in aviation. We have an airport that is challenged because of commercial pressures, particularly from passenger flights as these, for various reasons through COVID, seem to have been diverted to Deer Lake and St. John's. Certainly, I'm working very hard with the airport, the town and the Minister of Tourism to try and reverse some of that trend, which I think is unfortunate. It's sad if you live in Central but you have to drive 3½ hours to transportation by air. Air really is the new rail. Canada was made on the backs of the railway, that was the skeleton, the spine that held everything together. Now, it's aviation and we're working hard to continue to maintain that tradition in Gander.

We have, on the health care front, a new Family Care Team. The request for proposals for the location is out and in the market. That will provide significant enhancements to primary care, locally. Gander is a hub. Certainly, 80 per cent of its retail business comes from postal codes

outside the community boundaries themselves.

We have bachelor of nursing sciences program at a campus in Gander, a beautiful place, lovely equipment, state of the art and its second-year intake have completed their second year; its first-year intake have completed theirs and we look forward to another intake next year. I would like to congratulate the staff there. Their academic results seem to be as good, if not better, as any campus, including St. John's.

I mentioned immigration earlier on, briefly. Gander has always been a very cosmopolitan community, but we are seeing the benefits of our immigration approach. I was recently invited to the first meeting of the Sri Lankan Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and if the cooking is anything to go by, I will make myself a regular attendee of all their other meetings. It was really, really good. It was a family event. There were games and it was an opportunity for them to mix. There were people there with jobs at the bakery in Glovertown. There were people there with jobs with EVAS Air. There were people there with other roles in health care. Everybody had a job and it was a really positive experience.

I think the programs that my colleague in Health has put in place to recruit health care providers from elsewhere is going to bear fruit, certainly has some numbers to support it. There is a tradition of health care providers coming to Newfoundland and Labrador from elsewhere. As some of you, from my accent, may be able to identify. It's worked. I didn't stay two years; I've been here 30 years this May. So you're stuck with me for a bit longer I think.

The other thing is my colleague in Fisheries – I hate to mention the F word, it seems to be provocative sometimes. Gander doesn't have a fish plant, although it's perfectly located for one, and I have spoken to my colleague about that. What we are going to

have, though, is live holding tanks. Those are agreed, approved, there's funding and construction is going to start, I'm told, in the very near future.

There is a significant market for high-end fishery products to be shipped live and the airport is an ideal place for doing that. There's talk of handline cod being flown fresh to markets in Toronto, Montreal and maybe even Vancouver and we would be in a position to support that kind of thing. Again, economic development that won't just affect Gander, but will draw in benefits from the fishing communities on the coast of Notre Dame Bay and all the way around Cape Freels and into Freshwater Bay.

I hadn't intended to take all of my time, Speaker. I just wanted to put out a slightly more positive view of the world, without trying to pretend we're looking through rose-coloured glasses. There's work to be done. There's work to be done no matter where you look. But I think now the real question is: Are you better off now than you were in 2021? Are you better off now than you were in 2015? I would argue that the answer is yes.

With that, I'll take my seat.

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, a pleasure to get up here. Just to rebut the last comment of the colleague across the way, I think if you ask people: Are you better off now than you were in 2015? I'm getting the reverse answer. I'm getting the reverse answer that, no, we're not better off – we're not better off.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: I guess it comes down to who you're listening to, but, predominantly, that's what I'm hearing.

I've had an opportunity to speak to the amendment, the subamendment, I've talked about many issues Education, schools, health care, CGMs, IVF and the like, but I do want to pick up on a back and forth earlier today, when we talked about Question Period and that was around the venue, this \$21-million hotel that's been leased for three years to deal with the homeless and some of the back-and-forth banter and the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island actually commented: What price do you put on mental health? I don't think we were arguing that. We were bringing forth on the discussion around how much money was spent on this venue, which is still not up and running.

I've gotten up here and I've spoken so many times about mental health. I've presented many petitions about mental health. In fact, just the other day, one of the days this week, I got up and I spoke about an individual, a mother of three who's 14-year-old child is dealing with mental health and addictions and she cannot find help anywhere to help her in that.

I had indicated at that time this is a very common story across our province. Just today, wouldn't you know it, here's another similar case that ended up in the media. It talked about a little boy who would succeed in anything he put his mind to and now he's addict at 16 years old. He's an addict and his mother has been forever now trying to get help for her son. He's not in school. He's no longer in school because up to twice a week, he's overdosing – twice a week. These are very desperate parents, very desperate to get help for their child whom they love dearly.

This mother said: I couldn't care if my son hated me to the day he died, if I can get him help, as long as he lived a long life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: That's the mother – that's the mother saying that.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's sad.

P. DINN: Yes, it is sad.

This individual has been on a wait-list for over a year for a psychiatrist. It's great for us who probably are not dealing with that to sit back and say, oh, well, that's the parents. The parents are not in control. It's neglect on the part of the parents, but it's not. That's what we've come to in this world. That's what we've come to in this province. We do not have the long-term continuity of care supports to deal with these individuals.

That was the discussion earlier in Question Period when we talk about wraparound supports. When we make announcements and when we make those photo ops and when we go public, no matter who it is, there are people there who are dependent on hearing good news. They are dependent on that. They're hopeful that there'll be an announcement made and some action will occur.

That is where we are with this. You think about a mother or an individual who's dealing with mental health and addictions and have nowhere to turn and are looking for that glimmer of hope and hoping that there's going to be an announcement and there's going to be action – there's going to be action.

I'm not saying government has been – I can't even think of the word for it – throwing around these announcements and throwing them around without caring for the individuals behind them. But when you talk about those with mental health issues or health issues who are very much waiting and wanting to hear some good news and actually have action, then that's a big thing.

We've heard it very continuously from people with lived experiences when we're dealing with mental health. We've been told from people with lived experiences. They've told us that individuals with mental health challenges and addictions do not do well on

wait-lists. They do not do well on wait-lists. The same goes through for when we make announcements that are related to supports for these people. Whether it's wraparound or whether it's one-offs here and there. When they hear those announcements, when they see those media releases, they want to see action. They have that glimmer of hope: Where do I go – where do I go?

But we wait and we wait. I understand there's time that needs to be taken to establish some of these venues. My point is, well, once they're established, then announce it. Don't have people waiting and waiting and waiting in hope that they will actually get what's been promised.

You think of someone in a dark room, curled up in the fetal position dealing with a mental health emergency. They don't need to be told, oh, hang on, there's something coming. Hang on, we'll get you on a list in a year's time. There's an app for that; there's a phone number to call. It does not work.

The story in the paper today, it's almost identical to the story I told yesterday on another family. When I worked in the building, I worked with another co-worker of mine who was a little older; he actually had three daughters and I incidentally have three daughters now. And he had an issue with his daughter. I'm going back, I'm going to say 30 years ago.

He went everywhere – everywhere – to try and get help for his daughter. To the point where he called the RNC to come lock her up, because you will do anything – anything – to protect a loved one, especially your child. Like this mother said: I don't care if he hates me for the rest of his life, as long as he lives a long life. And that's saying something.

I know we get the banter back and forth here in the House, but when we talk about some of these that have real people and real issues behind them, and when you balance out a budget, you ought to look at

there's a need to have and there's a nice to have. There are the things that we need, that we have to have and there are things that are nice to have.

And I look at this and I just think of the announcement for this new rec centre, this new turf facility. To me, that's a nice to have. Yes, it's connected in some way to the Health Accord, but you tell me that money could not be spent on something that's of a greater priority of those people who are struggling with mental health and addictions.

You know, that's a nice to have. And I'm not arguing against it; I'm just saying, when it comes to a budget and you start prioritizing what needs to be done, then you want to put your money towards where it's really, truly needed. I say that because I know, with the turf facility that they're talking about, there's lots of agencies out there that are currently providing similar activities and similar facilities. So I struggle when I hear some of the situations out there and there's no immediate action for them.

Again, one that I raised before, and I think was raised here, has been raised a number of times because colleagues were getting calls from young women and young couples who want to start a family here. They're waiting over four years now on a promise to have IVF facilities here in the province. I've said it before – I go back – there was a 2016 AGM resolution, Liberal AGM that talked about providing this.

That's a long time for a family waiting. That's a long time for a young woman wanting to have a family to wait. That's your biological clock ticking, for eight, nine years now. So these are the things, when you make these announcements, when you say we're going to do this, we're going to do that, you've got to be cognizant of the people out there who are waiting on these announcement, who are waiting for action to be taken.

What we do in here is all about people helping people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: That's what it's about. I don't think that's an argument for anyone. That's what it's about in here. At the end of the day, it's people helping people. But you have to have an understanding of who it is that are looking for help and what they need. Yes, there are some announcements you can make; you know, we're going to fix the potholes, or we're going to have a five-year plan on the roads. Although there are people out there who want those potholes to go.

But when you're dealing with people with actual real health and mental health issues, that's a little different. That's a little different when you're talking about that. That's real life and death, in some cases. The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor spoke about a friend of his who lost his life through suicide. Who gave up hope, basically, because there was nothing there to help this individual. This individual could be here today, as well as many, many who are no longer here.

I've said it before, I said it the other day and I'll say it again – and I'm learning from this – and you get so many calls from people looking for help, and I used to say: Oh, he committed or she committed suicide. Nobody commits anything. That's putting the blame on the individual. When an individual was actually seeking help and couldn't find help and that was the end result for that individual, to no longer be here.

That's what we need to be dealing with. Again, I go back to why I started talking to this; it still goes back to we have to be cognizant of what we say and what we present out there in the public because there are people out there – they may not be listening to the House of Assembly, but there are people out there who are waiting

and waiting for that one item, that one action that's going to help them. And we can banter about what it is, if it's a protest or if it's this or if it's that, but at the end of the day, it's people, for whatever reason, people who need supports and, right now for them, they are not getting the supports that they feel they need. That's what it's about.

So when we argue about buildings like the \$21 million for the hotel down in Torbay or down by the airport, it has to do with getting a return on investment and ensuring that people are actually in there and being helped, which we're finding out currently, they are not. So, again, people are hopeful for that. Even when you talk about wraparound supports, I think the Premier spoke to the wraparound supports being in place, and then the Minister of Housing gave us a little different take on that, that they're not actually all in place.

Yes, I understand sometimes you confuse your message, sometimes you don't have the same message. But the point I'm making is, that message is what people out there in need are waiting for. That's what they're waiting for. They are waiting to hear will I have this or will I not? We know the state of our health care in this province. We know that you can build the buildings, you can build that field of dreams and you can expect that they will come, but you have to have people, you have to have the resources, you have to have those individuals, those professionals in place who can do the work.

If you're going to put them in one place, you've got to be taking them from somewhere else. We cannot be spreading our health care professionals too thin. So if we're opening these buildings and if we're going to have MRI machines and PET scanners and all that, it means nothing – nothing – unless you have the professional dedicated health care staff to be behind them. That's what you need.

I talk about people with lived experiences and I think everyone in this House tries to do their best to be empathetic, to put themselves in the shoes of the people that they serve, and try and figure out what they want and what some of the best solutions are for them, but truly you really can't do that – and I'm talking about all of us – you really can't do that unless you truly experience it, right.

I cannot comment, I cannot imagine what that parent in the paper today is going through. I can't imagine it. You're at the end of your rope. You've got a 14- or 15-year-old son or daughter who's addicted to drugs, who is overdosing twice a week, who is no longer going to school and you reach out for help. This is when you want those wraparound supports, you reach out for help and they're not getting it. They're on a wait-list of over a year for a psychiatrist.

In my mind, this is the need to have. It's not nice to have these wraparound supports; it's a need to have. These are the things we need here. We know that there's a huge – huge – amount of individuals in this province who deal with mental health care issues – over 100,000. And that's probably the ones who have identified, that doesn't even speak to those who are not identified, who haven't come out and said: I need help.

Of course, I will say, that is the start. If there is anyone out there that is suffering or dealing, reach out –reach out and ask for help.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor, he said his doors are always open. I commend him for that, and I guarantee, phone me anytime, and I would say that for anyone in this House. No one needs to go through some of these challenges alone. No, they need to have some place to go, someone to talk to as a starting point.

We talk about having 20 minutes to get up and talk, there are so many issues that I could be talking to and 20 minutes just doesn't do it justice.

I have talked to mental health a number of times. I talk to that because I see it in my previous role as the shadow minister of Health and now in my current role as shadow minister of Education, it's there in both of those, and I suspect mental health issues and addictions run through a lot of our portfolios.

But when you talk about trying to get our children off to the best start in life and dealing with the education system, which is becoming rampant with violence, with a child that was almost killed last March. When we look at that, then we've really got to have a closer look at what we're doing and, more in particular, what we announce, to ensure that when we make that announcement there's something in place.

You're not announcing it and saying no, hang on, we'll have it eventually. But there are some areas that we make announcements on – like I said, it's different than saying in the next six months we're going to do Witless Bay Line, put asphalt on there. There's a little difference between that and telling those who are struggling with mental health and addictions that oh, we're going to have wraparound supports for you but it won't be until down the road.

That's one of the issues that I have trouble with when we make these announcements. Yes, there are some that can be done. Make your announcement, take your picture, fine. But there are others that build up this: finally, finally there's hope, finally there will be something done and then they don't see it immediately.

So let's not build up the expectations of people, let's get down to business and let's put our words to action.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: Before I call for the vote, I will just remind Members of the Social Services Committee that we will be debating the Estimates tomorrow for Housing at 9 a.m. and then at 1 p.m. the Government Services Committee for Transportation and Infrastructure. We will be here in the Chamber for those.

So we'll call for the motion.

The motion is that we do now adjourn.

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.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. April 29.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, April 29, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.