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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

A point of order.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair on a point of order.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I rise on a point of order under Standing Order 49. Needing the time to review *Hansard*, this is the earliest opportunity I've had to raise it.

Yesterday, during Question Period, the Minister of Energy and Mines, when responding to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, stated – and I quote – so if he wants to talk about people telling lies, he should have a look in the mirror.

Speaker, this statement implies, especially to the public watching our hon. House proceedings, that our leader is telling lies in this hon. House. This is unacceptable.

There have been multiple rulings on this sort of language in the past, in particular, calling someone a liar either directly or indirectly, and I ask that the minister to apologize and withdraw that statement.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader to the point of order.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

What I would say is, in response to that, in *Hansard*, I was clearly replying to the Member for Windsor Lake when he said stop saying untrue things. He said it several times during his speech, thus insinuating

there was a lie being told and I said if he wants to talk about someone telling lies.

Speaker, it was clearly a response to how it was put forward, but I'll stand on a point of order, too.

SPEAKER: Okay. First of all, let's deal with the first point of order.

On the first point of order, as per usual practice, I want to make sure that I review *Hansard*, the tapes and so on. Everyone's points will count. I don't want to make any knee-jerk reactions and decisions.

So I will take that under advisement. I will report back to the Member and to the House on that point of order as soon as I can.

The hon. the Government House Leader on a point of order.

L. PARROTT: Point of order, under section 49, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the exchange in Question Period yesterday, the hon. Member for Windsor Lake directed remarks towards me stating that I should do my job, show some credibility and stick to the facts. He also said stop saying untrue things, which is an accusation of a lie.

I submit that these comments go beyond disagreement on the facts and, instead, question my credibility and, by implication, my integrity as a Member of this House, which is contrary to our long-standing parliamentary practice. While strong and energetic debate is expected, Members must refrain from language that questions another Member's honesty or capacity to perform their duties.

The Member for Windsor Lake, like any other Member, has opportunities to rise in this House and address comments made by other Members to add information or clarify something that may have been said. In the instance where he said I was saying

something untrue, he had every opportunity to respond to that.

However, I submit it is unparliamentary to question another Member's honesty or capacity to perform their duties – do your job, show credibility. I, therefore, ask that you review the remarks in *Hansard* and request the hon. Member for Windsor Lake to withdraw his comments and unequivocally apologize.

SPEAKER: As with the previous point of order, I will take the matter under advisement, review the tapes, *Hansard* and so on, discuss with my staff, look at past precedent and so on and I will make a ruling at a later date.

No more points of order?

Today in the public gallery, we have family members of the late Frank Howard, who is the subject of a Member's statement. I would like to welcome Frank's sons: Jon, Jordan and Nick Howard, as well as his daughter-in-law Kristy Howard.

Welcome to our House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia West - Bellevue, Placentia - St. Mary's, St. George's - Humber, St. John's Centre and St. John's West.

The hon. the Member for the District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

I was honoured to attend the graduation of the 2026 graduating class of Crescent Collegiate in Blaketown which many

students attend from the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue. It was also an honour to be joined by my colleague from Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. It was a pleasure to witness the talented performances and inspiring speeches, as they celebrated such a huge milestone in their lives.

It was equally remarkable that this class had to mourn the passing of their classmate, Miley George, who was memorialized in the most respectful manner.

I would like to thank the families, teachers and the community for their continued support, as it was very evident at the ceremony. I would also like to thank Ms. Wendy Mills for the invitation and the opportunity to address the graduates.

This is a remarkable achievement that marks the culmination of years of hard work, dedication and perseverance. Spread your wings and soar towards your dreams and always be proud to call Newfoundland and Labrador your home. Always dream big and make sure that the effort matches the dream you want to pursue.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me in congratulating the 2026 graduating class of Crescent Collegiate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we meet many people throughout our lives. But it is only when we pause and reflect that we recognize those who truly shape our communities. Today I rise to honour one such individual: Mrs. Bernie Schabell of Jersey side.

Bernie has dedicated decades of her life to serving others. Her contributions span organizations such as Red Cross, Canadian

Blood Services, where she has given over 50 years of service, and numerous local groups supporting youth, seniors and families.

Whether volunteering with minor softball and hockey, coordinating tournaments or helping seniors attend appointments and community events, Bernie's compassion is evident in everything she does. Her contributions have certainly not gone unnoticed.

She is a two-time recipient of the Lions Club Citizen of the Year Award and the Bernard Connolly Memorial Trophy, recognizing her dedication to minor softball. She was also honoured with the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal. Together with her husband, Kenneth, she has been recognized for their outstanding contributions to minor softball throughout our province.

Speaker, Bernie exemplifies the very best of community leadership and quiet kindness, humbly serving others through her everyday actions.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in thanking Bernie Schabell.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the impactful work of the Andrew Jesso Foundation, an organization built on compassion and legacy.

Established in memory of Andrew Jesso, a young man who was a DJ, ski instructor and reservist. The foundation honours a life tragically lost in a motor vehicle accident in 2022, 20 days shy of his 20th birthday.

Andrew was known for his kindness, fun-loving spirit and deep passion for the outdoors. He was a positive and valued member of Marble Mountain ski school, where he inspired young athletes. Many remember him by his trademark smile and uplifting attitude.

Incorporated as a not-for-profit and led by a volunteer board, the foundation works to remove financial barriers so children and youth can experience the physical and social benefits of skiing and snowboarding. Through its bursary programs, it covers the cost of snow school for children and helps train and employ youth as certified instructors.

Since launching at Marble Mountain in 2022, the foundation has expanded to White Hills and Smoky Mountain supporting approximately 160 children and 30 young instructors.

Speaker, I ask all Members to recognize the Andrew Jesso Foundation for the meaningful difference it's making across Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Do you ever wonder what you can do with those non-recyclable glass bottles that you chuck into the garbage? Why, turn them into sand and aggregate, of course. That's the innovative idea behind NewfoundSand Glass Recycling Co-operative. It's a community-driven, volunteer run and led initiative to transform how we manage waste glass in the province.

NewfoundSand's elegant solution turns those discarded bottles into high-quality sand and aggregate for use in construction, infrastructure and community projects.

A dedicated team of local professionals, committed to sustainability, innovation and community impact, work together to build NewfoundSand from the ground up.

NewfoundSand is growing and gaining strong support across the province. The College of the North Atlantic has formerly recognized the potential of this initiative for applied research, workforce development and industry collaboration that further strengthens Newfoundland and Labrador's green economy.

The benefits are clear: reduced landfill pressure, lower transportation emissions and a sustainable alternative to imported aggregate materials while supporting innovation and concrete products, road construction and community development.

NewfoundSand's practical, forward thinking aligns environmental responsibility with economic growth and showcases the power of volunteer leadership in action.

So please join me in recognizing NewfoundSand's forward-thinking innovative solution and approach to glass recycling.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, I rise to honour the life and legacy of the late Frank Howard, a respected business leader, community builder and proud Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

Frank Howard helped shape the modern retail auto industry in our province. Through his leadership of Capital Auto Group, he built more than a successful business, he created opportunities and supported families.

In 2025, he was honoured with the induction into the Junior Achievement Business Hall

of Fame, recognizing his entrepreneurial leadership and community impact. Frank's impact reached far beyond the showroom floor. Those who knew him best spoke not just of his achievements but his character. His philanthropy left a lasting impact on countless lives through the many local causes he supported. His contributions were not just financial. They reflected a genuine commitment to compassion, dignity and care for others.

Above all, Frank was a committed husband, caring father and doting grandfather whose legacy will live on through those closest to him and the many people he mentored and inspired along the way.

Frank Howard leaves behind a lasting imprint on our province through business, through philanthropy and through the lives he helped uplift. May we all be inspired by his example.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statement by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

C. PARDY: Speaker, on May 4, the federal government launched the 2026 Census, which will survey Canadians to paint a statistical picture of Canada's diverse population and the places where we live.

All Newfoundland and Labrador households will receive census invitation letters with instructions on how to complete the questionnaire online. Alternate formats of the census, including paper copies, are also available.

It is important that we all take the time to complete the census because an accurate census helps secure vital funding for

programs that benefit communities across Newfoundland and Labrador. Funding formulas for major federal transfer payments, like the health and social transfers this province receives, are based in part on population counts.

Further, our population uses census information when planning to support health care, education and social programs.

Speaker, the importance of the census to our country and province cannot be overstated, which is why we urge every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador to participate this month in the 2026 census. People can visit census.gc.ca for more information.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I, too, am pleased to join the minister in highlighting the launch of the 2026 census. Over the coming weeks, residents across this province will receive their census packages in the mail – I picked up mine this morning, very fitting that I had to do this – with alternate formats available to ensure everyone can participate.

Speaker, the census is safe and confidential, and I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to complete it. The results do more than just tell us how many people live in the province. The results help strengthen evidence-based planning.

It is unfortunate the Finance Minister did not have updated census data available when preparing this year's budget. Without it, he was obviously unable to fully align investments with the needs of our province.

This is the important thing about filling out the census.

We encourage everyone to deliver –

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I, as well, thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement and agree, as the minister has pointed out, census data is invaluable to us when we decide when and where to invest, like in this year's budget, but that's the key word: investment. All the information in the world isn't worth a row of beans if we don't use it.

We once again call on this government to redouble its efforts to be up front and clear about the choices it makes in areas like roadwork, to make decisions based on need rather than the party stripe of their MHA.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the winners of the Newfoundland and Labrador's annual Art and Letters Awards.

On April 17, at The Rooms, artists from across the province were recognized, with over \$47,000 awarded across literary, music and visual arts categories.

Awards included junior and senior winners, five recipients in the one-time HERSTORY Empowers category and 16 visual artists selected for exhibition.

With 507 entries submitted for the 2026 program, participation was strong and reflected the strength of the arts community.

Speaker, I am also pleased to congratulate Paul Whittle, who received the Percy Janes First Novel Award, the program's top prize, for his novel *Sunflower*.

First launched in 1952, the Arts and Letters Awards have long supported both emerging and established artists. The 2027 awards will mark the 75th anniversary for the Arts and Letters Awards program. I would like to encourage artists of all ages and all stages to create works for submission in the significant year ahead.

I encourage Members of this hon. House and the public to visit The Rooms, where the Arts and Letters exhibition will be open to visitors until May 18.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

I'm pleased to recognize the outstanding talent celebrated at the 75th anniversary of the Arts and Letters Awards. This program remains one of the most important cultural pillars in our province.

With 507 entries, this year alone, it's clear that artists from every corner of Newfoundland and Labrador continue to see this competition as a meaningful and respected platform for their work. And with more than \$47,000 in awards distributed, the program provides real, tangible support to emerging and established artists.

A special congratulations to Paul Whittle, winner of the Percy Janes First Novel

Award for *Sunflower*, to the five recipients in the HERSTORY Empowers category and to the 16 visual artists selected for exhibition.

Speaker, programs like this succeed because of institutions such as The Rooms with their exhibitions and our many provincial historic sites which preserve and promote the culture –

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time has expired.

B. FORD: – that art is built upon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

I, too, want to thank the organizers of that wonderful ceremony and congratulate all the worthy recipients, and notably Paul Whittle.

As a former Arts and Letters recipient in visual arts, I am keenly aware that artists cannot live on awards alone. They need financial support to live. That is why we call on government to reinstate the 2024 Year of the Arts grant funding so that more artists can devote more of their time to creating the masterpieces we all enjoy.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

This week is Emergency Preparedness Week.

Being prepared for emergencies is one of the most effective ways we can protect our families, homes and communities. It can make all the difference when it matters most.

Our government is committed to supporting emergency services and resources across this province. Through *Budget 2026*, we are investing over \$7 million in new funding for emergency services equipment, supplies, staffing, volunteer firefighting training and resources.

Speaker, I encourage residents to prepare an emergency plan and a kit that can support you for at least 72 hours in the event of an emergency. Information and resources are available through the provincial Be Prepared website.

From Hurricane Igor to the floods in Badger, Snowmageddon to the devastation of the 2025 wildfire season, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians has faced many emergency events that have tested our people across the province.

Speaker, I would like to thank all the first responders, volunteers, public servants and others who play a huge role in preparing for and responding to emergencies.

Together, through planning and investments, our province will be better prepared for whatever challenges may come our way.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Emergency Preparedness Week is an important reminder that readiness is one of the strongest tools we have to protect our families and communities. In a province that has faced hurricanes, wildfires, flooding and severe winter storms, being prepared is essential.

Speaker, while this year's budget includes funding for volunteer firefighting gear, we continue to hear from communities that pressures on emergency services are growing. Departments are dealing with rising costs and recruitment challenges, which require a sustained commitment to ensuring that front-line responders have what they need.

Despite these pressures, our emergency responders continue to show extraordinary dedication. Firefighters, paramedics, search and rescue teams and volunteers step up each and every time our province is tested. Emergency Preparedness Week is an opportunity to thank them and to recognize their service.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister of the advance copy of the statement.

We also recognize and thank our first responders, public servants and volunteers for their commitment and bravery.

As the minister stated in Estimates this week, we've been warned by Mother Nature and we must also take action to combat climate change. The choice is ours. Either we invest now, mitigate and prevent the

worst disasters, or we pay much more down the road to repair the damage.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier only revealed he had hired two people with close ties to his party to review an MOU that's already been reviewed after questions this week from the Opposition and from the media.

He doesn't know how much they're being paid and said in the media yesterday that they're actually reviewing definitive agreements, and those agreements don't even exist, Mr. Speaker.

Is this why the Premier hid his secret appointments for months?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm glad to hear the Member opposite talk about definitive agreements and none of them exist, which he's absolutely right.

They were not doing a review of definitive agreements. They are talking about reviewing exactly the work of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and the work that has gone on prior to any MOU being prepared. That's what they were focused on, and they're also making sure that we can turn around and use the report –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – that will be issued on May 19, reviewing it for the technical and legal issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, I wonder why the Premier would say that they were reviewing definitive agreements and other things if they don't exist, because they don't.

Yesterday, in Question Period, the Premier actually said – quote – this is not about disclosure, which is a little bit funny because they ran on transparency.

Now, as alarming as that is, we shouldn't be surprised. He won't disclose his advisors. He won't disclose the full Bay du Nord agreement.

What else is the Premier hiding about the MOU?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me be perfectly clear, I haven't hidden nothing. There are lots of people who get employed in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador every single day.

If you want to talk about hiding stuff, let's talk about the Member opposite and his record as a Minister of the Crown, when he turned around and signed a \$21-million lease without going to tender to one of his Liberal friends; when he turns around and sells land for less than it's worth; when he turns around and buys land for more than

it's worth without ever getting appraisals on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: This is the record of that particular Member opposite. We will not do that. We never have. I said I would do an independent review. We've done an independent review and it will be released on May 19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, Jerome Kennedy, Natural Resources minister for Muskrat Falls, when it went through at that time, claimed – and this is hilarious – Muskrat Falls would pay for itself. He actually said that. Now we're actually paying \$500 million a year to keep power prices from doubling as a result.

Bern Coffey was a Conservative staffer, paid also by the Conservatives, to criticize the deal.

Mr. Speaker, other than the Muskrat Falls boondoggle, what experience does either Mr. Kennedy or Mr. Coffey have in negotiating or reviewing hydroelectric deals?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I would say they have got a lot more experience negotiating deals than he does, according to what he did with the hotel.

Speaker, let's be clear. This has been said a thousand times. There would be no conversation around Gull Island, had there

not been a Muskrat Falls. The only way to get to Gull Island is by Muskrat Falls being constructed.

The Members opposite failed in execution during the construction phase. If they were so against it, they had the opportunity to cancel the contract in 2015 when they got elected. They had every opportunity to fix the things that they say are wrong. They just made them worse.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Premier and the minister talk to the people who transitioned out of the hotel where they were getting the help they needed because they were homeless and are no longer homeless. I would say that it was a pretty good deal for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Speaker, why does the Premier feel he needs to hire two more advisors and negotiators when Danny Williams has already said that the deal is dead? We all know that Mr. Williams is calling all the shots on the eighth floor when it comes to the MOU.

If the Premier disagrees, will he explicitly stand in this House today and say that Danny Williams was wrong when he said he killed the deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I will do and stand in this House today – everyone is entitled to their opinion. That's a fact. So I'm not going to argue with anybody or disagree about somebody who makes an opinion. Even the Members opposite are entitled to their opinion.

Let me tell you one thing. We have a vision for this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We have a vision where we want this province. Not simply to be a province where people come from, they come to. We want this to be a province where people live, not leave. We are going to satisfy that vision by making sure that we develop the resources of Newfoundland and Labrador in a way that the primary beneficiary is the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, if their vision is – one of the first things they're going to do – cancel the Future Fund, they should change their motto from "for all of us" to "God help all of us."

So let's get this straight. There's a minister who's advising people to sue her own government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: – if they can't get health care; another minister who's blaming people for having expectations that are too high when it comes to snow clearing; we have a part-time political advisor getting \$275,000 from MCP; and now you're bringing back the class of 2010 to run it all.

Speaker, it's concerning and people want to know who is really in charge.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would say to the wannabe leader of the Opposition that Premier Tony Wakeham is in charge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: And if we didn't have to go back and get people from – do you know why we have to get people from 2010? Because the last 10 years have been a disgrace to this province. It's left us in a mess with health care. It's left us –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – in a mess with building trades. It's left us in a mess economically, financially, from a social standpoint, every single failure –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – that could have happened, happened, and the only people that are happy in the last 10 years are their Liberal buddies who got all the jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

On budget day, the minister was frustrated with Premier Tony Wakeham –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: Two sides can play if the rules are fair – and her government for failure to provide the care that the people needed.

I'm hearing from people who are asking now that this was raised and she asked people to sue her government – what concrete measures has she negotiated from the Premier since she made those comments and will the budget be updated to reflect those results?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I want to talk about misinformation. I am going to just read from *Hansard* now, Thursday, April 30.

The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair said: "The budget cuts the Air Access Pilot Program for Labrador and the Northern Peninsula. They've cut it from almost \$6 million a year down to just \$2.7 million."

In actual fact, it wasn't \$6 million. That's inaccurate. It was actually \$3.5 million annualized, Speaker, and they didn't even spend that.

For me, what's going to be in the budget? Because I was taken out of context, there's the illusion that myself and the Premier had a rift and me and my caucus had a rift, Speaker. In actual fact, I said at the beginning I have solutions. I'm going to put solutions in place –

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the Labrador air access program put in place by the Liberal administration, \$3.5 million. In the blue book, they promised to scrap it and come with something better. They cut it down to \$2.7 million; the rest of it is the exact same. Another promise made, promise broken.

The government's investment in MRIs and other equipment is a start, but radiologists are already struggling to run the equipment they have had to their full capacity because of lack of staff. These medical radiation technologists are as important as the equipment, yet the only mention of recruitment in the budget is for doctors and nurses.

What is the minister's plan to recruit and retain other critical staff?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I don't think in the blue book we wrote that we were going to scrap the air access program. Scrap it, Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: What we were saying was we were going to make more affordable travel for people of Newfoundland and Labrador and especially when we're looking at Labrador, Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. EVANS: The air access program provides two subsidized tickets to residents of Labrador. It does nothing to address the high cost. In actual fact, we are continuing the pilot program to allow people to be able to access these two tickets while we actually come up with solutions to bring down the cost for real – for real, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, no answer on the equipment. That's a question we're getting a lot of feedback on, an important question. So I'll switch to another topic.

Speaker, *all Newfoundland Labrador* has reported that there will be significant cuts coming at the IOC mine in Lab West, the decommissioning of drilling machinery, parked other equipment and cancelling the purchase of new equipment.

What can the minister tell us about these cuts to a vital part of Labrador's economy?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

A very important asset to this province, and during the last 10 years, while IOC was high grading –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – and they were not utilizing the mine in the way it should have been because of oversight from this group of people over here who never oversaw the mine, they're in a situation now where they have to make up for it and readjust. That is exactly what they do.

We have talked to them on a very regular basis. They're coming here to meet with us on May 19. We have been helping them through the way, and we will continue to help them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, it's really frustrating when you ask a decent question

and you can't get a decent answer without them going down in the basement.

We were well on the way with the MOU. What Lab West needs is the opportunity for more growth, and that was in the form of an MOU which would have delivered more electricity.

Mr. Speaker, what has IOC told the minister about the need for more electricity in Labrador West? Not just for IOC, but for other operations who desperately need more power but see the potential slipping away as this government clearly does not want to proceed with the MOU, which included a plan to deliver four times more power to electricity for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my old house, below the basement, there was a cellar, so we'll go down to the cellar this time where they've been living since this House opened.

They know exactly when it comes to power for Labrador West. They know this because they heard it for 10 years. For 10 years, they were told.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Instead of coming up with the proper plan for the residents of Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – all of Labrador, they signed an MOU –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – that has no foresight into the future, that will not deliver the power requirements and needs for anyone to do the things in Labrador that has to be done.

IOC talks to us on a regular basis, as does Kami, Tata, Tacora, Iron Bear. They know when they're ready to build, they will have electricity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The Supreme Court in Happy Valley-Goose Bay is expected to remain closed until the end of the week due to a shortage of sheriff's officers, while the Provincial Court in Wabush is also closed. The minister and her working group have stated multiple times that more sheriff's officers are needed.

Why was there no support for sheriff's officers in their very first budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I can say, first of all, that any decisions that are made with respect to operational or scheduling matters in the courts is entirely within the purview of the courts. They are independent and, therefore, I cannot comment on that.

But I am glad that the Member opposite brought up the issue of the budget. It gives me great pleasure to mention the significant

investments that this government has made in terms of modernizing our justice system, which is now in a new era of justice in Newfoundland and Labrador and we're really looking forward to the improvements we're going to make.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Another promise made, another promise broken, unfortunately.

Speaker, we know that Member said something differently when she was on this side of the House. It's all about the political will.

With both Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Wabush affected this week, can the minister guarantee that there will not be more court closures elsewhere in the province, and does she expect any further court closures in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Wabush after May 8?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I have to say, over the last number of days in Question Period, with respect to questions that we have received regarding the budget, it is very disappointing, and I can say that it also saddens me, because we are not getting a complete and balanced perspective with respect to key facts in our budget.

That gives a misleading impression to the public. When you are omitting important facts like that, the public are not made aware of the good things as well. I think it's incumbent on any Member opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: They have a responsibility to the people that they represent to present an objective and neutral portrayal, at least, of what's being done.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Well, I'm sorry that the minister doesn't like the line of questioning, but the facts are the facts. There was nothing for sheriff's officers. We know that they are an essential part to the justice system and advise you to go back to the drawing board and reconsider the budget on what you've done.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

P. PARSONS: Speaker, why was the minister not being accurate in Estimates about not terminating any employees in her department without cause when we know, in actual fact, there were people let go without cause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, Speaker, I can say that this Member opposite has a pattern; she has a pattern of asking questions that she knows very well that we cannot answer, especially when it comes to a HR issues. That would be

completely inappropriate for me as a minister or any minister to comment on in terms of privacy issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, really, shame on the Member opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – for asking such inappropriate questions. She certainly is exhibiting a pattern for this. It should stop, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think the Member was asking to disclose who, I say to the minister.

I say to the Premier, this question I'm going to ask is not my opinion, it is the voice of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I've had many people in my district that are upset that the former premier is claiming he killed the Churchill Falls deal, which is important to them, and the fact that that former premier is saying more about the deal than the current Premier – the same minister who delivered the Muskrat Falls burden on the people of the province, Jerome Kennedy along with Bern Coffey, who had already called the MOU a mistake.

Why is the Premier surrounding himself with partisan, outspoken critics –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. LOVELESS: – and not the independent experts, like he promised?

Maybe the Minister of Health would like to answer.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people in this province voted us in based on their fallacies about the MOU. The people of this province voted us in because they trusted us to deliver for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians the right deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Not just a deal that got pulled out of the clouds, like everything else they've done. No consultation, nothing. Speaker, we will deliver the best deal for this province.

I would say to the Member across, in the last seven months, I haven't heard from him about the MOU. He hasn't written my office and asked any questions nor has anyone from his district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Maybe we don't write him because we don't get answers. The hon. Member across the way, he preaches relevance. Well, every answer he gives to every question is not even relevant to the question that's being asked, I say to the Member.

Speaker, this week the Premier is saying nothing and doing nothing on a \$225-billion opportunity for our province. When he announced his bias panel in December, he

said they would table a report on April 30. Now he claims he needs more time, yet again.

We know the Premier doesn't believe deadlines exist because he said it right here, but why is he not meeting his own deadlines?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I tell you what now, when they were in government, I had Members from his own Cabinet and caucus come to me and say that he didn't answer their messages or phone calls – not even answer to his own people. But I will go back and I will say something to you about this deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, 173 days is how long the former premier was in office. The MOU was signed last December. This November is when they left office and guess how many –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – definitive agreements they had signed? Not one. Now, they're here trying to say that they would have had it done by April 30 and met deadlines. Their own independent panel said it could not be done. So maybe they should take the advice of the people they hired and listen to them because they don't listen to the public.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, residents in St. John's West were alarmed to hear that a young man was attacked by as many as 10 individuals and beaten with weapons and chains leaving him hospitalized with serious injuries.

People are asking how violence of this extent is happening in our communities and wondering what immediate action is this government taking to address the rise in serious violent crime and assaults?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I can say, first of all, that public safety is a priority for our government. The Premier spoke earlier about the vision that our government has and part of that vision is to create a safer community for everyone who's here, and we are intending to do that.

We are showing that by some of the investments, first of all, that we've made – significant, historic investments – in justice in our province. We've never seen this before to this extent. That is a commitment, that is our priority and we're going to honour those commitments. We have shown that we've done that already by looking at the investments we've made in the budget.

There's much more to come in terms of legislative reform as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: The RNC themselves said that 21 new RNC officers is insufficient to reach the national average for officers per capita.

Speaker, this was not a minor altercation. Reports allege a coordinated assault involving multiple individuals and weapons.

Does the Minister of Justice and Public Safety believe her level of policing, prevention and intervention resources in St. John's is sufficient to deal with the increasingly violent incidents such as this?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you so much, Speaker.

Our government has invested in this budget. We have invested in our police officers. We're providing 21 new RNC officers, as well as –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Who wants their mic cut for the day?

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – 25 new RCMP officers. In fact, last month, I was able to attend the graduation ceremony. We saw 18 new RNC officers.

I've also met with the RNCA president, Staff Sergeant Mike Summers, and we are working with them to discuss how we can support the officers going forward who keep our communities safe.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

The Minister of Tourism has stated Newfoundland and Labrador will be the tourism capital of Canada. However, tourism operators say high operating costs threaten affordability.

What is her plan to keep tourism experiences accessible for families and profitable for businesses?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member opposite for the question,

Our government is committed to what we said in the blue book. We said that we are focused on making Newfoundland and Labrador the capital of tourism in Canada. We have a vision. We have a plan for that and I guess you're going to have to stay tuned.

I will say that we do have the lowest gas tax in Canada, so that helps. We also have a decrease in small businesses at 5 per cent –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: – and we also have the personal exemption for taxes up to \$15,000.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, a CBC story this week detailed the difficulties and uncertainty that skyrocketing

fuel prices are creating heading into peak tourism season. Yet, the Conservatives kept the gas tax the same. Tourism operators are now being forced to change how they run tours just to save fuel.

Does the Minister of Tourism see this as sustainable, or a sign that more intervention is needed from the Department of Tourism?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, my hon. colleague has stated that we have the lowest gas tax in the country. We do appreciate that there are pressures out there because of the elevated price of gas in our province. We are aware of that. Thus, the Premier has committed that we're going to keep an eye on affordability and we're going to address in the near future.

I want to address one thing. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair said decent questions. The only thing I would say, if I were an administrator for Clareville Middle School and this was the class, I would say I'd probably need three extra teachers in that class to make sure the learning occurs. Case in point – case in point.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish he'd start schooling his own people instead of trying to school us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, last night in Estimates –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. DAVIS: – the minister was asked if he would continue the vital work of the ministerial committee on anti-racism. His answer was he'd check on it. Speaker, this is not about politics. It's not about who started what. It's a matter of fundamental justice.

I ask the minister today: Will you commit right now to keeping this committee in place? Yes or no?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs and Growth, and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, our government is not driven by rhetoric. We walk the walk. With regard to hatred, hate speech, there is zero – zero – tolerance across this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Our government is fully committed to ensure that every Newfoundlander and Labrador, including newcomers, feel safe, feel welcome and have a platform for respectful speech.

With that, we are also engaging across the –

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Government announced \$31.1 million over three years to construct new public housing. We estimated \$250,000 per unit. The Minister of Housing says some could be as low as \$160,000. Local housing advocate Hope Jamieson notes that current construction costs are about \$350,000 per door.

I ask the Premier: How has government arrived at \$31.1 million as the right size to solve our housing crisis?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being, and Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

We are certainly looking at housing for the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are doing that with our data that we do have and the bills that we have allotted for certain areas.

He speaks of the Metro area here in St. John's. We're looking right across the province, Speaker, and we're looking at the different type of builds and how they can best serve the people of our province. I cannot put a dollar figure on it per unit right now because we're going from microhomes to one bedroom to two bedroom to apartment buildings to quadplexes.

Speaker, we are looking for all options to best serve the people of the province, and we'll certainly deliver.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Author the Reverend Maggie Helwig says that "we have chosen, as a society, to set social assistance rates at a fraction of what

we acknowledge is necessary to survive ...” Local advocate Hope Jamieson says, “providing people what is well-known to be a substandard amount of money to account for the cost of living is an *intentional policy choice*.”

So I ask the Premier: Why is his government choosing to keep social assistance at a fraction of what is necessary to survive?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being, and Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

It’s very important, when we have to serve the people of our province, the most vulnerable that we serve, we are looking at all options, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at the income support.

Right now, we have many affordability plans in our current budget to help the people of our province, but we are certainly looking at all options, including what the Member opposite said with respect to basic income. We are looking at our income support levels, Speaker.

I and my department and all of my staff are certainly doing what we can to help the people of this province, and we will certainly deliver the best that we can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O’LEARY: Speaker, a former RNC officer has opened up about her experience describing “a workplace rife with misogyny, organizational failures in training, governance, and leadership, which

deprioritized mental health support for members.”

This is not the first time these systemic issues have been raised; they even led to a workplace review completed in 2022.

So I ask the minister: What is your plan, aside from a much-needed, independent civilian-led oversight board, to combat these systemic issues?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I can say it is important to talk about the civilian-led oversight board. Our government is committed to strengthening this model of police oversight. That is important because we need to have a more transparent and independent framework.

I am looking forward to introducing, as well, though, reform, in terms of legislation, in the fall. I’ve been working with the Policing Transformation Working Group on this in terms of a new police act. We will implement a stronger model of oversight and that will include new legislation that will establish a better oversight model in our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O’LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

We know that police work is hard on officers’ mental health. The 2022 RNC Workplace Review highlights the need for more mental health supports for officers, citing that the government EAP program

worked, but they had a hard time due to the limits placed on the number of sessions provided.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour has consistently called for stronger mental health supports for first responders and all workers.

I ask the minister: What will you do to ensure officers and civilian workers at the RNC can access mental health help when they need it?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I can say that, with respect to wellness of officers, it's very important and it's a priority for us to ensure that when officers go to work every day, that they have that state of well-being. That is very important.

I have had discussions with leadership of the RNC and the RCMP with respect to ensuring that is a priority for them as well. I can say that we cannot direct the operations but we can work with them in terms of service deliver. We have had discussions and it's very important to continue to do that.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling three orders in council relating to funding precommitments for fiscal years 2026-27 to 2030-31.

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to provide an answer to a question that was asked a short time ago in Question Period.

From a question I had stated that if this were a class in Clarendville Middle School, I would need three teachers for learning. The next part, I would like to qualify why I would say such a thing in the House of Assembly, and that was from my hon. colleague from Gander's question that she had on the gas tax.

When we stand in the House of Assembly, I think there's an expectation that what is stated is accurate. Case in point would be, we spent two days – two days – debating the Future Fund. When the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island would stand up and says we are cancelling the Future Fund. We are not cancelling the Future Fund. That is incorrect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Read it in *Hansard*. We are not cancelling the Future Fund. Without getting into anymore details because after two days of debate, we ought to know the difference.

The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair stands up and says we are scrapping the Air Access Program. We are not scrapping the Air Access Program. Check in *Hansard* to see.

Then the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave says –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would say to the minister, I'm not sure that these were questions that were asked.

I would ask that you proceed quickly.

C. PARDY: Thank you.

The last one, the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave would say, another promise made, another promise broken.

From the question that was from my answer that was provided to the Member for Gander, I would say 80 per cent of the promises in the campaign in our blue book were honoured in the budget – 80 per cent. So three incorrect statements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I appreciate the minister wanting to provide clarity, but I will say that I am going to have a look at exactly how this section of proceedings is meant to operate, because it's not something that we get a whole lot, so that we're sure that we're all on the same page of exactly how this part of procedure is supposed to be utilized.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Standing Order 49, I just can't sit and have myself misquoted 10 minutes after I said something. I said it in *Hansard* this morning. It'll be on record in Estimates.

I never said you're scrapping the Air Access Program. I said the blue book said we're going to scrap the Liberal Air Access Program and we're going to come up with something better.

We put \$3.5 million in; you put \$2.7 million. Everything else that was complained about is no good, it is the exact same with a lot less money. That's what I said. The blue book says we're going to scrap it, we're going to do better, but it was another promise made, promise broken.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

There's no point of order. It's a disagreement amongst Members.

Petitions.

Petitions

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to recognize that the people who have presented the petition are here in the gallery today. I am honoured, as the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, to table the petition: Protect 34 Battery Road (Limeville) from Development.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Developers have proposed to build a subdivision on two parcels of land situated at 34 Battery Road and Cabot Avenue, formerly known as Limeville.

Thirty-four Battery Road is a Southcott-style second empire historic property that has not been designated or registered as heritage, although it was built in 1870 and survived the Great Fire of 1892.

If built, this subdivision will fundamentally alter the character and irrevocably destroy the heritage landscape and green space of The Battery and Signal Hill neighbourhood.

Preserving built heritage and culturally significant natural landscapes is crucial to Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism economy.

Signal Hill National Park has 750,000 visitors each year, while 85,000 walk through The Battery and the North Head Trail – including myself.

Therefore, we, the undersigned call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to declare this property to be a Provincial Historic Site under the *Historic Resources Act*.

I so table the petition.

Speaker, if I could just have a moment to speak about this, I had the great pleasure of attending the first of probably many marches that not only the nearby residents and the neighbours of the area, but people who are concerned about the historic preservation, the cultural conservation, the tourism industry, the cultural identity that we are continuing to chip away at in not only the City of St. John's, but in our entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Until we actually become much more aggressive and proactive on supporting our tourism industry and this particular area, which is incredibly significant for the amount of tourism that goes through that area, the people are being very, very vocal about the fact that we need help. Not just from the City of St. John's, but we need it from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So that is why the prayer of the petition is asking TCA to look at making the property a provincial historic site under the *Historic Resources Act* before we lose all that draws people here and for our own benefit and our cultural identity.

Thank you so much.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand on a petition – I forgot them the last few days. But when I was travelling around Labrador, every town I went, they were passing me signed petitions.

Speaker, this one is on the Labrador South Health Centre.

WHEREAS the Labrador South Health Centre is the only health centre serving the entire district; and

WHEREAS the Health Centre currently has no doctor on site and no X-ray or laboratory technician.

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 prioritize returning those services to the Labrador South Health Centre.

Speaker, somebody watching, who is a PC supporter, might say you had 10 years – because I've had that. I got one real huge one, in particular, in the area. But I will tell you that what I get up on in petitions on the Health Centre every day are concerns that have happened in 2026: the loss of a lab tech; the loss of an X-ray; CBC machine down since the 19th of March; INR was ongoing, still not fixed. I was told by the former COO on the 31st of January in a meeting that that was ready to be fixed.

I'm just going to read into the record – I'm getting many, many, many emails, but a young constituent on a cancer journey sent me this email. They said: Seriously, we have a clinic and to see it spiralling downward is horrible. The Teladoc on Tuesday must have thought, where in the name of God do we live? He asked for CBC blood work and it was said, sorry, we can't do that.

Then he asked for another type of blood work and, again, was told, sorry, we can't do that. Then he said, well, can you do an X-ray to see if the tube is dislodged? It won't tell me if it's blocked, but it will give me some idea. Again, the nurse said, sorry, we can't do that.

This individual goes on to say, as long as I can remember, growing up here, we could do an X-ray and the simple blood work, so what is the problem? Why can't that unit that's needed here do the blood work in Forteau?

If the one there was not working, why hasn't it been replaced? Simple. But instead, now, when you go to Forteau with an issue, you have to get medevaced out. And what's the cost of that?

I'm hearing that repeatedly. I was just in the Labrador Straits. I was at an event last weekend, Saturday night, with 225 people and there was almost as many health stories about the downward spiral in the last few months. It's my job. I have a responsibility to be the voice to those people that hired me, again. I know the Minister of Health, I will say when she says she wants better health care, I believe her.

We got to continue to push. I don't know where the problem is. Is it at the health authority level? I'm going to continue because we've got to move to a better place. To the Finance Minister, it's going to save you money when we can get a few pieces of equipment in there because we won't be medevacing people out.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for and the background for this petition:

WHEREAS blood services are currently by appointment only; and

WHEREAS seniors and patients with disabilities may not have access to computers or the ability to book appointments online; and

WHEREAS seniors and patients with disabilities are forced to use a telephone service to book appointments, and the phone booking service often has long wait times and frequently results in the calls being dropped after waiting a long time;

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to bring back drop-in services at least one day a week for blood collections.

Speaker, first, I want to thank the front-line workers for all they do, and they're only following policy. I get many, many calls in my district from seniors and people with disabilities, especially a lot of people with brain injuries who find it very difficult. They can't book online. Some people have no email address.

They've called for help to get back in the system to get their services back online; they can't navigate the computer system. To call and book by appointments – I know my CA, yesterday alone, spent three hours on the phone booking appointments for seniors. I have a lot of seniors in my district and they're finding it very difficult.

If it's an emergency and urgent is put on the slip, apparently, they can go and they will be looked after right away, but these are routine blood work. They feel that they could always go to the clinic and get the blood work done. Sometimes they go and the people working on the front lines, the lab technicians and the people taking blood, are saying we have to follow policy. If we do you, today, we're breaking our policy.

Sometimes they do sneak somebody in and do it, but they say you have to book an appointment. It's not fair to the seniors in this province who worked their whole life to spend hours and hours on the phone trying to book just to get blood work.

So I'm urging the government to look at this and have a second look and let the people who need it the most, the seniors in our province and the people with disabilities, be able to go and book their appointments, walk in and get their blood work done within a few minutes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Orders of the Day.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, Order 3.

SPEAKER: Order 3.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety,

that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Whole to consider Bill 12.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House do resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 12.

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.'

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We're now considering Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act." (Bill 12)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party and the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I think I was in the middle of my questions when we adjourned the last so I just want to finish them, if possible. Not that I may have anything, really, to add to it but I'm going to ask the question, for sure.

Under clause 12, section 39.3, duties of the court. I think that's on page 21. How will the sharing of emergency protection orders and

other court orders be accessed and shared between the Provincial and the Supreme Courts? Who will be responsible for obtaining the records?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: First of all, thank you for the questions. I'd just like to provide some background, first, if I may, with respect to section 39.3, the duties of the court. Again, this is a new section. It's added to the *Children's Law Act* to align with the *Divorce Act*. This sets out the duties of the courts in regard to parenting proceedings.

The amendment aims to improve coordination and communication among various legal proceedings. Then it goes forward to outline what some of those legal proceedings would be. For example, to properly consider any issue, it's clear that the court must be aware of all relevant information. So whatever court orders, legal orders that are out there or proceedings involving the parties, it is important for the court to be able to consider those. That's what this amendment does.

This particular amendment changes – and it's drafted in three categories. It's drafted in a civil protection, is one, child protection and criminal. I think that the Member was asking me, particular, about protection orders, proceedings related to orders made to protect a person's safety. For example, a civil protection order limiting contact between family members can be relevant for the court to know about when the court considers a parenting matter or how the parties are to provide up-to-date information to one another.

So that's one of the important categories, but there's also the child protection category and that talks about proceedings or other measures taken or orders that may be made in the context of child protection proceedings. That also can be relevant to

the determination of parenting matters. I'm just summarizing the section, just for the benefit of clarification.

Then criminal as well. The court must be aware of any pending or existing criminal matters or criminal proceedings or any criminal orders or any undertakings or any recognizance or any kind of matters or orders like that that could be potentially relevant.

I'll give an example of that. It would be, say, a criminal court can order that an accused has no contact with a specific person for a specified period.

Hopefully, that provides some clarification, but just to directly answer your question, it would be up to the courts and each party, whether they have a legal advisor, that person would be responsible for raising any concerns in regard to that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I guess that's where I'm going with it. I can go there from a school point of view in terms of trying to make sure that you had the records from other schools and so on and so forth. If I understood the response correctly, it would be up to the various parties involved to make sure. But I guess there's no coordination effort. I would assume that whoever the legal, or whatever for the parents, they would be responsible each for them. But things can get by, I guess. That's what I'm looking at.

I think when you were talking there, how will this legislation ensure that courts are aware, that they have all the information? I would assume the communication is not as easy as it might seem.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I think that's a fair question because that is obviously a concern, that the court has all of the relevant information.

I would say that the court has the duty, as well as legal advisors. They would have that responsibility. So, yes, each party is responsible for providing the evidence. That is their duty as a legal advisor, whether it's a legal advisor, and it's the court's duty to examine and ensure that there's adequate search in place to make sure that they have all of the relevant information before them.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Would you envision, or do you think, let's say the courts because each person would have their own resources, but if the court has that duty as well, would this require then the courts to have maybe additional staff to make sure of that, because now it seems to be putting that onus on them as well, or is sufficient staffing there already?

I just see this as, someone has to do it, someone has to be responsible for it. I can see this being a challenge as well. So I'm just curious, do you envision the court system needing more people?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: It's my understanding that in consultations prior to this legislation, the courts have stated that they can operationalize these changes within the existing resources that they have. So to answer your question and to provide that reassurance, there are no concerns in that matter.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

Clause 14, section 41(9) enforcement of access is on page 24. The current act states, an application, for enforcement of access, "shall be determined on the basis of oral evidence only, unless the court gives leave to file an affidavit." The bill amends this section to say, the application "shall be determined on the basis of affidavit evidence only, unless the court allows a party to proceed in another manner."

The question is – well it may not be that simple – what's the reason for that change?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm just identifying, so this is under enforcement of parenting time or contact for section 41(9).

The previous legislation indicated – I just want to clarify that I have the – the "application shall be determined on the basis of oral evidence only, unless the court gives leave to file an affidavit." But under this current section it indicates that: The application shall – which is mandatory directive language – "be determined on the basis of affidavit evidence only, unless the court allows a party to proceed in another manner."

Basically, it looks like this, I can say that this is aligning with the federal legislation. With respect to the policy rationale, I may have to get clarification on that. Those changes to the *Divorce Act* were made and this is legislation which is mirroring that but, essentially, it's reworded. That's my understanding; it's just reworded.

But it's just to align with the federal legislation. It's not my understanding that there's any significant change. I'll have to clarify that from the oral evidence to the affidavit evidence. I just want to be 100 per cent sure about that, so I will clarify that for you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: This is section 41(14) and it's on page 25. The current act states: "Subsections (1) and (5) do not apply in respect of orders made under the *Divorce Act* ... or a predecessor of that Act."

This provision has not been included in this bill. When I first went looking for that, I couldn't find the section (14), but that is not included there. I'm just wondering why that was not included in this bill. Why is that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just want to clarify, so you're looking at the old section. The current section of the *Children's Law Act*, the two subsections (14) and (15) which are not present in the proposed amendments that we are putting forward.

So I'm just looking at this: "Subsections (1) and (5) do not apply in respect of orders made under the *Divorce Act* ... or a predecessor of that Act. (15) This section does not apply in respect of a denial of access or a failure to exercise a right of access or to return a child"

Again, what I can say about this is we are looking at, basically, this piece of legislation and we are mirroring whatever is in the federal *Divorce Act*. In terms of policy rationales for those changes to the *Divorce Act*, really, I would say that that's perhaps outside the scope of the discussion. I mean, we do support those changes, of course, as they are in the best interests of the child. But I really cannot speak to the rationale to the federal government making those particular changes in this case.

Simply, I can say we're just aligning with the federal legislation, and that's what I would say to that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Clause 15, subsection 42(1), Order restraining harassment

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. DINN: I haven't asked it yet, sorry.

CHAIR: Oh, sorry, I apologize.

J. DINN: If she wants to –

AN HON. MEMBER: Read his mind.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, you don't want to do that.

J. DINN: You don't want to do that, no. It will be a labyrinth; you'll get lost.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: The current act states: "On application, a court may make an interim or final order restraining a person from molesting, annoying or harassing the applicant or children in the applicant's" – those are the words. The bill reiterates this subsection, but the words "molest" and "annoy" have been removed. I guess, is there a reason for that, or is that covered by other language?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, with respect to this particular section 42, Order restraining harassment, this section comes from ensuring alignment with the *Divorce Act*.

One of the changes that we see there comes from replacing "lawful custody," because we are moving away from those kinds of adversarial types of terminology, with "lawful care or charge," as the term

“custody” is removed from the *Divorce Act*. The reason for that is to ensure neutral language is less adversarial. That’s why custody is replaced.

Essentially, I think the same thing applies to your question, to the Leader of the Opposition – or to the Leader of the Third Party, is we’re updating the old terminology and existing definitions to use less adversarial language, once the amendments to the CLA come into effect.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John’s Centre.

J. DINN: Chair, thank you, and I do appreciate how many times I’ve been promoted to a minister, Leader of the Opposition in one way or another here. I’m just waiting for the salary to come along with it.

Clause 21, page 27, section 47.1: Relocation – I think some of these have been answered, so I’m just going to try to skip to the ones that I think may not have. It says, in subsection 47.1(2), it sets the requirements for a person who wishes to relocate to notify other people who shares decision-making responsibility, parenting time or contact. In subsection 47.1(6), it sets the means for the non-relocating person to file an objection.

I think, for the most part, you addressed the issue of determination of significant impact, eventually it’s going to be the court that’s going to decide that, if that can’t be resolved. I’ll try this one, and I would assume the court is going to be the answer here as well, but we’ll see.

This section requires a 60-day notice to parties before relocation, but section 47.3 doesn’t set a requirement for advance notice requirement for changes of residence. If a party, who is changing residence, files a late notice, say, two weeks with another party and that party decides the change constitutes a significant

impact to the rights to a person who has decision-making and parenting time, they have very limited time to react to this and file an objection.

I guess, more importantly, the child or children will be exposed to the turmoil caused by this conflict. Should changes of residence also require a 60-day notice?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I’d just like the Leader of the Third Party to answer, what was the last piece of the sentence that you said?

J. DINN: I was saying there’s a difference, there’s a 60-day requirement – sorry, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John’s Centre.

J. DINN: The section requires a 60-day notice to parties before relocation, but that doesn’t seem to be the same for changes of residence. Should they both be aligned 60, but maybe that’s been discussed – that’s been worked out somehow.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: From my understanding, looking at this, again, this is added to align with federal legislation. When you look at change in residence, decision-making responsibility and parenting time, for example, that aligns with the federal legislation. But a change of residence, I guess, is on a smaller scale than a relocation.

It still requires notice, but the level or degree of notice is not the same. I’ll just give an example. Say if you were moving from one apartment on the East End of St. John’s to another, on the West End, for example, the change of residence is different than, say, the relocation section. I think that is perhaps

the rationale that was behind that when the *Divorce Act* came into play.

When you have, for example, a change like a grandparent with a contact order, moves from Bay Roberts to Clarke's Beach or St. John's, again, that's change in residency. So this just outlines the process for what is considered a relocation versus what isn't. They all require notice.

Hopefully, answers your question there.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

So section 47.1, and the subsections I was just referring to, they parallel sections 16.9 and 16.91 respectively, of the *Divorce Act*. Now the *Divorce Act* has regulations setting the form of these notices and objection forms that calls for information beyond what is stipulated in the bill. I think we've talked about the legislation is trying to align with the *Divorce Act* itself.

So can the minister comment on this difference in specifications? It seems to be more in the *Divorce Act* than in the bill. So that's the first thing, the difference in specifications, or if you see any difference in specifications?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just need clarification. So we're looking at the proposed change of section 47.1, relocation. What is the section that you're referring to in the current legislation? I just need to make sure that I –

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you.

So sections 47.1(2) and sections 47.1(6), they parallel sections 16.9 and 16.91 respectively in the *Divorce Act*. So that's what I'm looking at.

The *Divorce Act* has regulations setting the form of these notices and objection forms that calls for information beyond what is stipulated in the bill. In other words, the *Divorce Act* seems to be calling for more information than what's highlighted in the bill.

I'm not comparing this bill with the old bill. Why the difference between the new bill and the *Divorce Act*?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: All I can say, really, in regard to that, is the new provisions are added to align with the *Divorce Act* but they also require regulations be considered. As such, regulation-making authority is provided. I think that goes to section 84 of the CLA, I believe.

Does that provide clarity to the Member?

J. DINN: The one –

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I should know better, Chair. My apologies.

CHAIR: I know when we're in the Estimates process, we can go back and forth but I just remind people that we're in Committee.

J. DINN: I agree that's fair, that's no problem. That's my fault in this case.

Looking at the differences, I guess the other part, and I don't know, maybe we can have a discussion after just to make sure I'm understanding what I'm talking about. The question I would ask, the last one, is: Will the courts make forms available to the

public for these applications and notices to ensure all pertinent information is conveyed?

This goes to if there's a difference in the regulations setting the form of these notices and objections that calls for information beyond what is stipulated in the bill? In other words, if the *Divorce Act* seemed to be calling out for more information than what's in this bill, I guess it comes to reconciling the information that's required. That's where I was going with it. I don't know if that makes it clear.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I think that it makes it clearer to me. The forms are created by the courts, via the rules of courts, but I can say there is a delayed proclamation of the bill to allow the courts time to update and develop forms that will be available to the public. That's why there is a delayed proclamation of, I think, they're estimating three months.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Chair.

The Member has asked all my questions, but I do have one comment because we are in Committee here on Bill 12. We are hearing from families and their comment is such that the legal system is somewhat too slow to ensure the best interests of the child. However, I know that this bill is about modernizing the language but aligning with the federal standards and strengthening the child-focused decision-making.

I just want to say that I know this is a big bill – 49 pages – so I know there has been a lot of work into this bill. I just want to thank your staff for their work on this bill. That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'd just like to thank the Member for acknowledging that. I can say that this has been a very work-intensive project for the officials in the Department of Justice and Public Safety. They've worked extremely hard and I appreciate the acknowledgement of that work. That's very great to hear.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no more speakers.

Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 86 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 86 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 86 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act. (Bill 12)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 12 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report this bill without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue; Chair of Committee of the Whole.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the Committee recommends Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends the bill without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time presently.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 12 now be read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act. (Bill 12)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 12)

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Government Services, that Bill 10, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 10 now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022. (Bill 10)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 10)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1, the budget motion.

The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in this House to represent the residents of Waterford Valley.

Before I start, I just want to pick up on something that the Justice Minister said in Question Period with regard to the budget. By and large, it's not our job, as Opposition, to promote the budget. We talk about the budget and we question it. I did have something written here before those comments were made.

Budget 2026, I'll say, to the Finance Minister, that there are some good things in the budget. Of course there are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: Some – easy. The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, don't get carried away. I said some.

We've got some more long-term care beds. That's a good thing. We can all agree that we need more. There's money for the Janeway. That's good – the children's hospital. Increasing the Seniors' Benefit; there are some more child care spaces. We know the challenges for ECE workers. But there are many things lacking and that's what we're here to do. As Opposition, we're here to question and we're here to highlight. So that's what I'm going to try to do today.

On the plan to lower taxes, the first bullet point, they said no new taxes and fees for residents. That's great. It was the same as in the *Budget 2025*. Second bullet point had \$45 million to minimize the impact of Newfoundland and Labrador Power rates planned to be implemented July 1. So I feel this is a little disingenuous.

Now, my fellow MHA Member for Mount Scio used the coffee fund. I'll use a slightly different one on the Newfoundland Power money. It would be like my daughter starting babysitting. She wants to save up money for a new iPhone, because they all want the new one, but she doesn't have enough money and she doesn't have a bank account. So all the money she makes and all the cash she makes, she gives it to me to put it in my account. She doesn't want to leave it around the house; she has a little sister. So all the money goes in our bank account.

Months later, she has enough money and she wants to buy her new iPhone. So I go to the bank, I take out the money, I go to the store and I buy her a new iPhone and I take all the credit, when all I did was hold the money. Actually, in this case, I did do something because I probably drove her to the babysitting gigs in this case. Anyway, I just feel that's money that the ratepayers already paid, so I don't feel personally that

that even should have been included in the budget.

The fourth bullet point, the reduction of the gas tax from 7.5 cents on gas and diesel – a \$67-million savings, not insignificant. The residents got this last year and the year before. So it's a savings, you've said it many times, of zero to zero. There's not much saved from last year. All things being equal, you'd pay the same for gas last year as this year. But we do know, with the price of oil being up, we're actually paying way more for gas.

Now, that is what the price of gas is now in theory. The government has nothing they can do about it, but practically there is because not to reflect on a previous vote, but there was an amendment to reduce gas tax by an additional 1 per cent which, as we know, didn't happen.

One of the things that the government has been saying all leading into this budget, for a couple of months now, was that there are lots of levers they can pull. There are many levers. Look out when the budget comes, in 2026, it's going to be a great budget, all the levers we're going to pull. I've talked to many residents in many districts, certainly lots in mine, that don't feel there was enough levers pulled.

The budget has come and gone. When we're questioning the government, since the budget has come out about all the things that we feel that's been missing, one of the things we keep hearing is, well, we've got four years. So prebudget, it was look out for all the levers. Since the budget, it's, well, we have four more years to do that – well, 3½ I should say now. It seems like the goalpost keeps moving. I don't feel it's good enough for the people who are struggling right now.

The seventh bullet, they had saving consumers \$25 million by extending the reduction in registration fees for passenger vehicles and light-weight trucks by 50 per cent. That was the same as last year, so,

again, it's zero to zero. They're not saving any extra money. In terms of cost of living, it's the same as last year.

I mentioned it, I think, a few days ago, the \$2,000 that was promised in the blue book for rotational workers, it's still not in the budget.

I want to touch on public safety. The National Police Federation welcome the investment – of course, they would that – that was going into policing. However, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary did call the 21 new RNC officers a great start, like we talked about earlier, but noted it's still insufficient to reach the national average of officers per capita.

A member of the Act Now Intimate Partner Violence Reform Committee said he was disappointed to see no money for pre-conviction ankle monitoring for IPV victims included in the 2026 Newfoundland and Labrador budget. I know it is something that my Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi has brought up multiple times in this House. Advocates do stress, I've heard, that the period between charges and the trial is especially dangerous and, without proper monitoring, survivors face a heightened risk of further harm. They argue the system falls short of protecting victims when an accused person is released on bail.

Looking at public safety spending, many think it's heavy on enforcement, and there has been some investments in enforcement. They feel there should be more going towards prevention, and I agree with this.

Under public safety, we had 24-hour snow clearing. We've talked about this many times and we'll agree to disagree on this, but the current government spent a few million claiming the 24-hour snow clearing was back for at least 14 routes. We know all along it never actually left. These routes were already being done, 24-hours a day, with the third shift, the night shift, being called in.

The minister will say that it takes three hours for staff to be called in. You have to start your vehicle, clean it, drive it to the depot, load it with salt, et cetera – that's his words, roughly, not to be quote him exactly – in three hours. While I strongly do disagree with this three-hour assertion, I will acknowledge that there is some time lapse from when staff are called in until they show up. However, how often does this actually happen where, out of the blue, we call people in?

We have very competent staff in our public works department and, just two days ago, we had Leo who retired, I believe, at age 83 or 84, after 50-odd years of service. One of the things we talked about, about Leo, is how often he was checking the weather – constantly.

So when we know there's a weather event coming, we have staff checking. You're not waiting for people to go home to call them in. You're calling them in before that weather event starts or while that weather event is happening. So you have a shift that's on, scheduled, then that shift that's to be called in – previous now I'm talking last year – would have been called in so there's no three-hour lags. I just wanted to make that clear.

Now, in *Budget 2026*, there is \$3 million earmarked for more 24-hour snow clearing and expansion of routes. I think I can speak for most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, certainly in rural Newfoundland, they welcome any investment. But the hard winter I think has highlighted a need for this investment and I look forward to finding out where these routes are and the expansion that it will have.

A Plan for Jobs, specifically energy: The budget doc says protecting and growing jobs in the energy sector while advancing emerging opportunities will strengthen the province's position as a reliable, competitive and environmentally responsible energy

supplier. I'll be honest, Speaker, I find that even hard to read when we've got a Churchill Falls agreement that has expired and we've got two new people hired.

I'm not even going to get into that because I could spend the rest of my time on it. It's just very frustrating. We've heard from the public many times that they want this deal to go through. I can tell you on Monday, I met with Trades NL. It was a good meeting to learn first-hand about some of the challenges they're facing. One of the last things said in that meeting was they want the MOU to go through.

A Plan to Build: I do find that headline ironic in a sense. One of the first orders of business was they cancelled a major build, cancelled a hospital. Yes, I'm talking about the hospital on Kenmount Road. Instead, they're going to renovate a hospital that has parts that's over 100 years old, one century.

As recorded by a local news outlet in November 2022, St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in St. John's is in the worse physical condition of any hospital in this province, according to a graded system used by the provincial government. The government used what's called a facility condition index, FCI, to help determine when it would be more cost effective to replace rather than maintain. St. Clare's scored 53, the lowest of any hospital in the province. Fifty-three places this hospital in a critical category, as typical industry standards consider an FCI of over 30 as a threshold to replacement. So if it's over 30 per cent, replace it. St. Clare's is at 53.

Let's not forget the \$1.9 million in the budget planning for a new urgent care centre in the Minister of TI's District of Conception Bay South. I'm not saying the residents in Conception Bay South don't require it, I'm just saying the quiet part out loud.

The new MRI in Grand Falls-Windsor and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, two Conservative

districts. I'm sure this is great for these districts, but as was said earlier today, the staffing for these machines – and let's not forget there was one in the blue book promised for the minister on this side in the District of Burin - Grand Bank and there was no money in the budget for the MRI down in Burin - Grand Bank.

The blue book said they would build three ferries. What does the budget have? It doesn't have the building of three ferries. There is talk of planning work being done to advance the building of these ferries, and I will recognize that there's an RFP out for a swing vessel. That's welcome news, but no three ferries that were promised, Speaker.

I want to jump now into the Multi-Year Capital Works program and the challenges. Seven years on St. John's city council, I know first-hand how good and how beneficial that Capital Works program can be for municipalities because, at the end of the day, the residents I represent in the Waterford Valley District are the same residents that the council at the City of St. John's represent as well, just in a different fashion.

But you don't have to take my word on these changes, you can take the word of Municipalities NL. Municipalities NL feel they were not meaningfully consulted. Now while the minister would say he's open to meeting now, those meetings should have taken place pre-budget. The announced changes were made without meaningful engagement and consultation with MNL and affected municipalities. They feel last-minute technical briefings does not constitute collaborative consultation. Municipalities feel that they should be a partner in shaping infrastructure programs that directly affect local services and long-term planning.

MNL, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, had requested program improvements, not these changes. MNL had consistently raised concerns about

challenges within the Multi-Year Capital Works program. Their recommendations focused on improving the program design, flexibility, predictability and responsiveness to municipal infrastructure realities. The changes announced do not reflect the solutions municipalities have been advocating for.

They say the changes fail to address core program issues. The revised program does not adequately address long-standing concerns, including funding predictability, flexible in-program delivery, escalating construction costs, timely project approvals and municipality's ability to respond to emergency infrastructure needs.

The shift to a three- to four-year cycle raises serious concerns with MNL. Extending the cycle from three to four years without increasing program funding reduces the per year allocation while creating greater uncertainty for municipal capital planning. Municipalities require stable and timely funding windows to plan, tender and execute infrastructure projects efficiently. Longer cycles may delay critical infrastructure renewal.

So the impact on municipalities is significant. The removal of 15 municipalities from the Multi-Year Capital Works program fundamentally changes long-term planning capacity for these communities. For the seven remaining municipalities that are in this program, the new allocation model raises questions about adequacy, fairness and whether funding levels reflect real infrastructure needs. All municipalities who were enrolled in the Multi-Year Capital Works program now have to apply to fund new infrastructure projects due to the provincial Capital Works program for 2026. This is a significant loss.

These changes affect more than half of Newfoundland and Labrador residents, seven municipalities remaining in this Multi-Year Capital Works represent 226,000, nearly half the province's population. The 15

municipalities who are no longer included represent about 74,000 residents.

Predictability in infrastructure funding is essential. Municipality infrastructure planning requires stability and long-term certainty. They say government must recommit to partnership.

What is MNL calling for? Municipalities NL want immediate review of the announced changes. Now I understand the minister has had meetings with some municipalities, I think that's great but, again, this should have been done pre-budget.

In summary, they said municipalities asked for improvements to Multi-Year Capital Works that was announced, what was announced does not reflect these recommendations. It does not adequately address core fund program challenges and was introduced without meaningful consultation.

I talked to Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador CEO, Rob Nolan, on these budget cuts after the budget came out. These are big changes and MNL's issue with this, as I've said, is they were not consulted. They feel the changes here is in the seven that are currently in the Multi-Year Capital Works, they're actually receiving less money.

The minister says the mayor of St. John's should be happy that they're getting more but they're not, they're getting less. Before, it was over three years, now the funding is over four. The number looks higher when you look at it at face value but when you drill down, when you average it over four years, they're actually getting over \$500,000 less per year, the residents of St. John's and the residents of Waterford Valley who I represent.

What's worst for the City of St. John's is they can't apply for this funding this year. They were told they can't apply until 2027, meaning basically no money, no provincial

money for capital works in 2027, a full year lost.

The capital city is self-administrating. They have their own engineers, so let them apply this year, don't lose a whole construction season. Also the Capital Works funding hasn't changed since 2017. Inflation has skyrocketed, we all know that, since then. So on top of getting less money per year, they're now getting less work done for the money they're receiving.

Such a major shift to this program, as it is, there should be some transition. There should be something there to protect the municipalities that rely on this infrastructure money.

If you look at Mount Pearl, Gander, Corner Brook, Grand Falls-Windsor, they're all getting 25 per cent less per year – 25 per cent less. Grand Falls is about \$229,000 per year, Gander is \$227,000 per year, Corner Brook is \$395,000 per year and Mount Pearl is \$845,000 per year.

Now, while I can almost understand, in a sense, the government wants to have it on per capita, in a sense I get it, but these are major losses.

I will say that about a dozen years ago, I think it was about 12 years ago, there was a study done and there was a \$1-billion infrastructure deficit for municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador – \$1 billion. Factor in inflation and 12 years later, we're probably looking at somewhere between \$1.4 billion and \$1.5 billion. So municipalities need more money right now, not less. If the minister and the department wants to make adjustments to make it more fair, fine, but it needs to be with more money.

What did some of the other stakeholders have to say about the budget? From some of the local news outlets, what did the Registered Nurses' Union have to say? The president, Yvette Coffey – and, Speaker, if

I'm not allowed to say her name, I apologize, but I think as long as it's not in a derogatory –

SPEAKER: That's fine.

J. KORAB: Yes, thank you. I just wanted to confirm.

They had major concern around the lack of investments retaining nurses. Eight million dollars was allocated in this year's budget to train and recruit nurses, but the budget line does not specify retention. So seeing that word missing was a major letdown for them.

She was also concerned that there weren't any allocation for addressing workplace violence. She called this a major omission. It's one thing to recruit, to expand nursing seats for nurses, practitioners and registered nurses. But if we're not going to retain the people that are already in the system, the devil is in the details. That's her words.

The chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students NL had some positive things to say – positive things to say. Again, we're not all about negative over here. But he did add there are still concerns around the funding for Memorial's long-term stability and he has not seen any allocation for this year. It definitely fell short in terms of Memorial University funding.

Memorial's Faculty Association had similar concerns regarding the lack of funding for the university. President Lisa Moore said she didn't see much in terms of infrastructure planning for post-secondary education. She said it's difficult to run a university in 2026 on a 2013 budget.

Stacey Lucas, a secretary and treasurer of CUPE NL, she said – I quote – we think there are some really positive things in the budget. Our overall concern, though, is that the budget does not address the low pay for public sector workers, and we feel the recruitment and retention crisis is probably

going to come out even worse – end quote. She went on to say that the budget funding projects doesn't fund the people's needs to make these projects a success.

Gord Piercey of the Allied Health Professionals says adding MRIs and increasing long-term care beds is great news, again. But won't go far without staffing. To quote: We have an awful lot of health professionals and even if they're here in the province, they have to leave to become a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist or a speech pathologist – end quote.

They also said: So we're competing with them leaving and we're trying to get them back here where we need them to live, train, run the programs, and right now I'm not even sure they would qualify for tuition reimbursement.

I'm going to get to housing next time I speak. With about two minutes left, Speaker, I just want to, in summary, compare a little bit. They're increasing the deficit. That's not spending smarter. That's what we've heard for the last six months – seven, I guess, now. Increasing the deficit is not spending smarter.

Budget '25 planned to return to surplus by 2026, 2027. Budget '26 – no path forward, deficits for all of us. Spending smarter, the Finance Minister said, many times. Spending from budget '25 to budget '26 is up. Did I read that right? Yes, spending is up.

Bottom line – 2025 aimed for fiscal recovery and 2026 abandons that path and accepts sustained deficit. I feel the 2025 budget was about fiscal repair, and 2026 it's spending to support people, which we need and I will agree we need to spend to support people, but we'll worry about the balance later. Nothing was more clear about this when the government is no longer putting money into a Future Fund.

In summary, *Budget 2026*, I feel it relies too heavily on uncertain and volatile revenues, offers short-term tax relief, continued some of our government's tax breaks and programs and some target investment; but, ultimately, this falls far short in helping people of this province with the cost of living and affordability measures – the very thing impacting residents the most, right now.

With rising deficits, rising net debt and no path to balancing, the government in place is placing the burden on our future generations.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

I recognize the work that goes into preparing a provincial budget and the expectations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. While I'm not going to start positive, I do promise my colleagues that I will end positive,

Speaker, this budget falls short of what was promised to the people of the province, and I'm going to start with the health care system. I just want to say to the people at home, they asked me when I would get the opportunity to get up and speak about the District of Placentia - St. Mary's. Because when I was delivering specific petitions, they were wondering why I was focused on one subject each time. I said when we debate the budget, we would all get an opportunity, every one of us in the House, to get up and talk about our districts.

I want to talk about the health care sector and the nurse practitioners. I'm a General Hospital School of Nursing 1990 grad – I am, and the Speaker would know that. I, definitely, support the investment in nurse practitioners and the way we're moving

forward with nurse practitioners and the value that that they have to community. I support the Nurses' Union but announcements are not access. I look forward to access to nurse practitioners and physicians within a very short order.

I just want to talk about the St. Mary's clinic, the then and the now just to compare. A year ago, we had a doctor two days a week and a nurse practitioner three days a week. Now, that's pretty good service that you could access someone five days a week. Fast-forward to today, we have a doctor one day every two weeks. That's a significant change. We're down to one doctor.

Add to that, the Town of Trepassey next door just had a decrease in their medical services. They had somebody retire. So we're going to have a ripple effect in that entire area from Trepassey right on up to Riverhead, Mount Carmel, where we now only have a doctor one day every two weeks.

Speaker, this is not just one clinic. This is a system under strain. We have seniors now having to travel a large distance, and I've had seniors reach out to me to see if I could find somebody that would come into their home to do blood work because they just were not able to travel out to Holyrood or to St. John's or Placentia for blood work.

I just want to mention the Whitbourne situation. Whitbourne has urgent care, and I just recently had people from the St. Mary's, Riverhead area go to Whitbourne to access urgent care because they couldn't avail of any more services in their area. They couldn't get an answer down at the clinic simply because the doctor's appointments were blocked up and there were no more appointments available.

That's quite the drive if you have to go from St. Mary's to Whitbourne urgent care, but even worse if you arrive at urgent care and it's Teladoc that's there. That system was set up that it would be available to people

seven days a week at this point in time, but unfortunately, it's not.

I understand there are restrictions and strains around trying to get nurses and doctors in our emergency units in rural Newfoundland, in our urgent care units, but the budget did mention Whitbourne. There's no timeline, and the people need care now, not in a year.

The Placentia emergency is also feeling the impact of the Teladoc in Whitbourne, the one doctor every two weeks in St. Mary's, the retirement that happened recently in Trepassey, and the overall impact is an absolute ripple effect. It's causing a lot of problems.

I would say to my constituents, come into St. John's and see if you can get an appointment at the Urgent Care in here. Then I look to Facebook only to see that Urgent Care had to close early probably because of staffing reasons; it didn't say why.

So, Speaker, there is an investment in health care in the budget, and I am going to watch and wait. I really, really do hope that the nurse practitioner program, as it is announced, is going to be very successful. I'm truly looking forward to that.

Next, I'm going to move to roads. Usually, I start out with roads. Historically, for the last 10 years, when I stand here, I start out with roads. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were promised action, relief, results; but, as I said, they feel that they have received something different in this budget. Now, I know there's the blue book and there's the four-year mandate, but there are certain things like health care and roads that we can't wait four years for.

Yes, there's been a lot of investment in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's. The minister has said that in the House and I agree with him, there has been, but that's over 10½ years. I know the MHA prior to me

worked really hard. Every time I meet the MHA that was in the position prior to me, we have a conversation because he's a family friend. We'll talk about roads and he says his number one issue was always roads and my district is bigger than what his district was. Roads, roads, roads, roads, roads, it's non-stop.

I know some of the potholes are being filled now, but, unfortunately, in this road plan, there is no pavement allocated for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, no new pavement. There are two bridges, one which I think – according to engineers – won't be accessible anymore, but I know that one is gone to tender and the second bridge, which the engineers are saying needs to be replaced. So that one is on the list, but there's no new pavement. There was a Route 10 announcement made in August of 2025, and that's kind of between myself and my colleague, the minister that represents Trepassey, St. Shott's. It's kind of in between the two of us, so I know there's going to be some work done there because it was awarded.

Let's go to Route 100, the Cape Shore, specifically. Last year, we did have some investment in Route 100. It was sporadic in different parts of Route 100, which I applaud the engineers and the staff for picking the worst areas and doing them. I know we ran into some issues with the contractor during the election period and there was a request for more funds. Of course, we were into an election, that couldn't happen. I know culverts were put in the ground, but the roadwork wasn't completed. It's very unfortunate to see that into the next fiscal year, this roadwork is not being completed. The culverts are in the ground and I know they're not going to go anywhere.

However, Route 100, the Cape Shore, has no cell service – no cell service. So if you break down, you're waiting on the good will of someone who's coming along to help you. There are no service stations; the closest one is Placentia. So if you need a

tow truck, the goodwill of the person who comes along to assist you and then you have to try to find a tow truck to come get you. There's some dense brush and a lot of moose on the Cape Shore.

The ambulance operator has reached out to me a number of times. He's trying to bring people to the Placentia hospital in the dark and in the fog with the moose and it's not easy to navigate an ambulance with sick individuals over this road. There is a huge safety issue here.

I have a significant number of nurses for the Lions Manor and medical staff who live on the Cape Shore. We all want our medical staff to get to work, each and every one of us, but it's kind of hard for them to get to work if they smack into one of these big potholes, end up with a flat and don't have assistance. They're going to be delayed an hour to two hours at times. Then the staff who are at the Lions Manor can't leave until they get there.

I just want to talk about Trinity South, also. We had a plan; our government had a plan for Trinity South. There are a lot of byroads in Trinity South. You go down Route 80 and you do not see how big Trinity South actually is, but you go off Route 80, it won't take you long to realize there are a lot of residents, upwards of 3,000 residents in that area from Markland right down to Green's Harbour.

Our plan invested just around a million dollars in 2024, a million dollars in 2025 and we had planned to continue to invest. That's a small amount in today's calculation, a million dollars, and we would continue to invest in '26, '27, '28, but I have no idea, I don't know if there is a continuation plan. I can't get an answer from TI. I assume they realize that we did some work in '24-'25 and we were going to continue '26, '27, '28, but no idea, not the clue if TI is going to continue on and invest in Trinity South.

Anyone who knows Trinity South, I'm sure everyone knows Dildo, when I say the Town of Dildo, major tourism attraction. People from all over the world come to visit Dildo, but here we are with our wonderful welcome mat of a road full of potholes.

Anyway, Speaker, I digress. I can keep going on roads. It's just non-stop with me.

I'll go back to St. Joseph's to Admiral's Beach, a main road. The only way people can get in and out is this one road. Now I've been told by staff that this is going to tender. I'm hoping it's gone to tender, I do not know. Half of the main road is eroding and now you have only one lane open. That would be fine for cars and trucks, but I have millions and millions of pounds of crab now coming over this. The weight of those trucks is immense and they're coming over this lane, out of St. Joseph. I expect any day to get a call saying, Sherry, there's x-amount of crab stuck on the other side of the road and they can't get across. The road has collapsed; it's eroded into the ocean and what are we going to do? I have no idea how they're going to get the people or this product across when that road gives out and, again, I have no idea if it's gone to tender. Can't seem to get an answer. It's like a road erosion problem here and it's like a tick-tock as we wait.

I know it's only a matter of time that people are going to be talking about the Salmonier Line, significant number of people live off the Salmonier Line. The number of people who have moved out and took permanent residency since COVID days is unreal.

The Argentia Access, we know it's the gateway; the ferry comes in and the people from all over the world come in across the Argentia Access. In the last 10 years, there was a fair portion of the Salmonier Line and the Argentia Access upgraded, but the other sections are still there. The MHA prior to me – so that's 10½ years ago – had done some work on the Argentia Access also. We have the main road in Whitbourne; Whitbourne is

a fairly large community and that road definitely needs investment.

Now, for anyone at home that's listening, if I have not said your road, I know, I could be here all day if I listed every single road in the District of Placentia - St. Mary's that need work. Yes, like the minister has said, there has been a lot of money go into Placentia – he's right, there has, but there has to be a lot more go in.

It's a contradiction to tourism here. When I talk about Route 100, Cape St. Mary's – and I say Cape St. Mary's, I'm sure everyone in this House knows where the Cape St. Mary's Ecological Reserve is and the Argentia ferry and that we do get a lot of tourists, but there is no way I'm sending someone out over Route 100 or recommending Route 100 to go out to Cape St. Mary's when you have no cell service, no service station and a road that's unpredictable. I just can't tell people to take their campers and their trailers and their vehicles out over that road.

There is no way government can claim to lead in tourism while roads to flagship destinations are unsafe. That's a total contradiction. You can't do it.

Speaker, budgets are about choices and this government has made choices that do not reflect the commitments they made to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is not an inconvenience, these roads, this is about safety.

So that gets me to home care and self-managed care, which is something I have been advocating for, for a number of years. Yes, the agency rate of pay did increase under our government and, yes, I have been advocating the present government to increase the self-managed rate. If it was us over there, I'd still be advocating, as had the previous minister of Finance.

Self-managed care, we're getting \$17.05 an hour today; agency care staff are getting

\$21.05; and the minimum wage is \$16.35. There is a line item in the budget that gives a \$2 increase for self-managed care, so that will bring them up to \$19.05, but they're still \$2 short their colleagues who work in agency.

Well, I say colleagues, but I have to correct myself, because I, myself, employ four individuals and, of those individuals, I have two who work in self-managed and agency. So they come to my house and work in self managed and then when they leave my house, they go do a night shift in agency where they get \$2 more an hour and it's the exact same individual.

Actually, I just received a photo from one of my home care workers of my son who is at a house today because the Geraldine Rubia Centre had some damage last night, smoke damage because of a fire. So the home care workers got together and had bingo, I believe, at a house.

They just sent me a picture, and it was four individuals sitting together on the couch. They're all having a good day. They have four home care workers. One is in agency, so she's receiving \$2 an hour more right now, while the other three who are self-managed, they're doing the exact same care – my son is non-verbal, so his safety is paramount, but it's the exact same care.

So I will continue to advocate for the additional \$2 to bring them up to par because I firmly believe that the individuals who are working in self-managed and those who are working in agency care are doing equitable work. I will continue.

There's another little thing I have about self-managed and home care. The maximum hours in one position is 40 hours. So you cannot work more than 40 hours for one employer, but you can leave one employer and go to another employer and work another 40 hours. You can work 80 hours, paid by government, through government in one week, but it has to be for two separate

employers. Now, that's a strange policy because you're still working 80 hours, but you have to have two separate employers. It cannot be the same.

So if I want someone to work for 55 or 56 hours, or even 46 hours, they can't do it, but they could work for 40 and walk next door and work the additional. It's a policy, just to let the government know, that I am going to be singing out about a fair bit.

I applaud the government for the Disability Advocate – definitely. That's something that we've been advocating for a good many years. There's been a lot of stuff – I came into government in – I have to think sometimes – November 2015, and I had a list of things for persons with disabilities. I come from the disability community, and the Disability Advocate was definitely on that list. We had to wrap our head around how it was going to look, and I'm glad that we had the Seniors' Advocate and the Child and Youth Advocate there also. These Officers of the House, they are paramount positions and they're great positions. So I really, you know, applaud the government for that.

I just want to move to the Port of Argentina and Cooper Cove development, and I'm really hoping that the port can work with the Department of Energy and Mines and get the additional support that they need to advance that initiative because that's a huge initiative for the area, the Cooper Cove project. There's a significant amount of money from the province and from the federal government already allocated for the project, but it's going to need more assistance. Time has gone by and we all know the cost of everything has inflation.

We've said this in the House of Assembly that we could find about \$110 million worth of Liberal initiatives throughout the 2026 budget. I know government will argue back and forth that they've changed the initiatives and they're not exactly the same and what have you, but we could find about \$110 million worth.

I know it's government's first budget and I do hope for a smooth transition. We do have some of the same staff that was with this government, with the new government, so I applaud the staff. I kind of think there's some progressive policies lacking in this budget. I am a bit concerned about that.

Again, I say, people don't need promises; they do need care. They need access to medical professionals today. That is what government campaigned on and they were elected on seven months ago. I really, really am looking forward and hoping that they do deliver on that.

I have one last thing to say to the Minister of Environment. I just want to thank the Minister of Environment. I know we were campaigning and we had the issues with the sauce plant in St. Mary's. I know our government had allocated some funding for it, but there was additional funding needed. The minister was on *Open Line* and he has spoken to the mayor and he did commit and the minister has come through with his commitment. So I just thank the minister for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: I'm happy that the sauce plant in St. Mary's is going to be addressed. That's one positive thing.

Thank you very much, Speaker. That's pretty much all I have to say today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, I don't have any letters to wave to say he did a good job or she did a good job, but hopefully I will – hopefully I will.

Anyway, a pleasure to talk about the budget. As always, I begin by saying it is an honour and a privilege to stand on behalf of the people of the District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, down on the South Coast.

Mr. Speaker, to begin, I think it's on the minds of everybody, and that is health care, in my district and the province as a whole. Not just health care in this province, but health care throughout this country. Infrastructure is very important in terms of health care delivery. Last year – actually a year and a half before last year, it was a planning process through, I call it, Central health, in terms of a need for long-term care beds and acute-care beds and a family care clinic down in the Connaigre Peninsula Health Care Centre in Harbour Breton.

There was an announcement made last year that there would be a 10-bed, long-term care extension in that hospital, in that facility, because it is needed. Even the current Finance Minister and the current Health Minister has preached it over the last several weeks, but, yet again, it was not mentioned in the budget, not referenced in the budget. They did refer to acute-care beds. That extension would help go a long ways to what people down there have been calling for in terms of 10 beds for long-term care, but it also would open up for acute care.

That's where it is a problem in that facility down there because there's no room for the acute-care piece. I brought this to the attention of the Minister of Health and the Finance Minister even before Christmas, long before to the Health Minister, and I thought there may have been something in the budget that would indicate that we are moving forward with that, but there was not.

I can tell you there was a lot of disappointment from nurse practitioners and seniors. Because the day that the announcement was made, there were mayors, councillors, business owners, seniors in wheelchairs, outside of that

facility, and it was a great day for the South Coast. But that was all squandered in this year's budget.

But I live in hope that it will be recognized. Because it has been preached that the significance and the importance of long-term care beds and acute-care beds, I can sit down with the Minister of Finance and Minister of Health and tell them that it would be a good project right now for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, which the Premier said many times during the campaign, many videos, that he was going to build up rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, that's not building up rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I say, it's a missed opportunity but, as I said before, we'll live in hope.

Also in my district, Mr. Speaker, we have Mose Ambrose Clinic. That services several communities as well and that was serviced by a nurse practitioner who has now moved on to Central for his own investment and reasons, and I respect that. But there's a void there now.

People are having problems, obviously, with appointments. Hopefully, there will be a resolution, but it's a challenge. It's a challenge to house the proper staff in that clinic. When it's a challenge, it becomes a challenge for the seniors that are in the area because travelling to long distances – and I've said it before and I think most people appreciate in this House that the District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, you're about 200 kilometres away from the Trans-Canada Highway. During COVID, we faced much stress in terms of diversion to Grand Falls, which certainly brought on a lot of stress and strain in that facility in Grand Falls, which was unfortunate, but COVID is behind us now and, hopefully, we'll never experience another example like that.

Mr. Speaker, also in my district, in terms of health care, there's a Bay d'Espoir clinic in the Town of St. Alban's and that services a lot of communities in and around that area

as well. They've certainly been challenged with staffing of that clinic and providing the service for people. There's a doctor there that, from a contract perspective, is there for several months but not there for 12 months. We're constantly looking for commitment from him, but his lifestyle with his wife and children is that he cannot commit right now to 12 months. We're still hopeful and that's part of a recruitment process, it's always ongoing.

It doesn't matter what government is in or what minister is in the chair, recruitment and retention is always a challenge but it's always ongoing. Those administrative people, to say that nothing is happening, as far as I'm concerned, is so disrespectful to the people who are putting hard work in trying to attract people to those rural areas and in those clinics. I know, I've witnessed the work that has been ongoing from those administrative people and it's not fair, no matter who says it, it's not fair, whichever side of the House it's being referenced to.

Mr. Speaker, I have isolated communities in my district and health care on the mainland part of my district is difficult enough as it is. In order for them to have their appointments, you have to go by ferry and we know the challenges around ferries. Any MHA that has ferries in their districts know the challenges that it brings and that even further increases the challenges of getting medical staff to those communities, because no matter where you are, we all deserve equal access to health care.

In terms of this year's budget, from my district's perspective, there's nothing there to help those. In terms of the ferries, well, that's a plan yet to be seen, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of seniors, and I brought this to the attention of the Minister of Seniors as well and others on the other side who know about this, the example is so unfair to a senior in this province.

A senior in this province, from my district, travels to Alberta to visit family, like many, many do, and while there he had heart troubles. The medical staff there determined that you're going to be air lifted to Edmonton, I believe, if I'm correct in terms of the community. That was a decision by the medical staff. He was worried about the financial cost of that. That financial cost, which he was assured –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

E. LOVELESS: Anyways, I'll continue Mr. Speaker.

The cost to that senior was reassured that there would be no cost to the senior. Well, that senior returns to the province and gets a \$12,000 bill in the mail.

AN HON. MEMBER: Shame.

E. LOVELESS: That is shameful. He was reassured that wouldn't happen.

I've made attempts and brought it to the attention of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Seniors. I was hoping that this would be dealt with but it's not. I spoke to former CEOs of health care and they have said to me that MCP is for that. I said, very interesting it is for that.

What really frustrates me is that here's a senior in our province and that senior is now in hospital because of the stress and strain of that stress on him, that financial stress. What really bothers me is that the Premier makes a decision to hire a part-time staffer and there's a \$13,000 bonus that nobody can justify.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I want to hear the Member.

E. LOVELESS: We have a senior in this province who's stuck with a bill for \$12,000.

Where are the priorities? The Minister of Seniors talks about smart spending. I believe that smart spending is not just spending, it's investment into a senior in this province that's suffering right now. It's shameful, as far as I'm concerned.

In terms of home care workers and home care: I have a mother that's 86 years old and still in her house. She is getting good home care and is still privileged to be in her own home. I go to visit her, obviously, when I go to my district because it's home and to see how she's still happy in her home, being cared for by a home care worker. We can never put enough value on home care workers.

I know there was an increase in home care workers' wages, I believe, in the budget and I encourage this government to go even further in terms of helping those home care workers because they provide the care.

Within the home care envelope, I guess, also there are the home repair programs that keep seniors in their homes. It's been ongoing for years in terms of home repair, but it's getting to the point – a lot of seniors have said to me, what has been allocated for repairs to your home is now not sufficient. We need to make adjustments to that.

I haven't delved far enough into the budget to see if that's the case, but I would encourage –

C. PARDY: It's there.

E. LOVELESS: The Minister of Finance is saying it's there. Hopefully, it's enough that's there because we know the challenges around that for seniors in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of municipal funding, we know questions were asked today, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador is not happy. They're not pleased about the

project funding. They had a press release out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to hear the hon. Member.

E. LOVELESS: I did hear the minister responsible for the infrastructure program say that small towns are facing changes. Yes, they are. I hope he's true to his words when they said it's about helping them. We will see. I know he's listening very intently to what I'm saying.

The next thing, Mr. Speaker, is roadwork. Now, I'll get thrown comments about, oh, well, you put a lot of work into your district when you were minister. Yes, I did. I did, absolutely, and I'll tell you why. There was 12 years before I got elected that there was neglect. There was not consistent funding. There wasn't consistent funding and the businesses in the area asked for consistent funding.

Bay d'Espoir Highway was voted as the worst in Atlantic Canada – the top three worst. Now it's classified as the top three. Who would apologize for that? No Member in this House of Assembly would because we deserve it. The people in Bonavista deserve good roads as well, absolutely, 100 per cent, but consistent funding is important.

I'm concerned because I've heard the minister talk about: we'll pave roads where there are lots of travellers. Well, if that's the case, rural Newfoundland, sit back, there are going to be rough roads ahead. Because in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it's not just about the numbers, is what I always say. Down in my district we had three fish plants; a lot of product went over those roads and the roads need to be upgraded and be consistent about it.

That's the same as what we did for the mining down in La Scie and the Bay Verte

area. I remember we sat down with the mining and they said we need consistent funding, and we did. We said over four years, 10 kilometres per year, and it was done.

I know the minister is listening, who is responsible for that area, and he knows it because it did happen. They thanked us. I got a letter that was given to us – thank you for listening. So that's important. That's important for sure, for rural parts of the province.

Also, in terms of roadwork, paving is important. There's no doubt about it. But then you have moose fencing – and I know the Member for Exploits gets really excited, but he did confirm for me in Estimates that he's going to take care of Route 360 because a lot of it is in his own district. Actually, there is beyond 50 kilometres, so we're coming to you. Hopefully, you're a man of your word.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: It's very distracting, I say, Mr. Speaker. It's very distracting. But I hope he lives up to his word, but we'll see.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to listen to the hon. Member. I ask for your co-operation.

E. LOVELESS: Yes, very important to have his co-operation for sure.

Moose fencing, Mr. Speaker, is important as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask for your co-operation as well.

The hon. Member.

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, you should be saying if they got conversations, please take them outside.

But the importance of moose fencing goes to the safety, Mr. Speaker. We know we have moose fencing on the TCH. It's continuing now. It was a good idea. It was a good decision that we made and I'm glad that they're following on good ideas that came from us.

But also, the vegetation suppression program within TI, and I'm hoping that the minister will be aggressive in that because areas that's already done by brush cutting now should be sprayed because it can last for 10 to 15 years. Hopefully the minister – and I know he's listening very intently to that – will follow through on that, for sure.

Mr. Speaker, I did two petitions on in and around the Milltown-Head of Bay d'Espoir to St. Alban's. The road is definitely beyond repair there as well. You talk about the economic case of it, there's a fish plant in St. Alban's, you have the aquaculture building in there – I'm sure the minister will go down and see that – and the hydro. It's my understanding that unit eight will be constructed. So a lot of activity going on down there. Mayors would tell you if they were here, businesspeople would tell you and the general public would tell you that we deserve for those roads to be upgraded –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask Members to have your conversations outside if you're going to have them.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Like he needs it.

E. LOVELESS: Oh, I don't need it. I got big shoulders. Like the Member for Torbay, I think it is, says, I got big shoulders too.

AN HON. MEMBER: Cape St. Francis.

E. LOVELESS: Cape St. Francis, yes, down that area.

Mr. Speaker, to talk about success in districts as well, I mention three fish plants. We have one in Harbour Breton – because I know the Minister of Fisheries is listening, and this is important to him. I know it is, and he's going to go down in the area and visit and appreciate. I think he might take the Minister of Seniors down there with him to see the aquaculture, what's going on and get an appreciation for what's going on in the area, and currently we have –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: Maybe the Member for Exploits should go down too because it would probably do him good to go down and see what benefits we bring to Bishop's Falls, actually, and his district because our people go and pump a lot of money into your district, so I know you're thanking us for that. I know you are.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

E. LOVELESS: I am trying to address the Chair, but I'm getting sidetracked by the Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask all Members for order. We're getting close. Constituency week is ahead. We're getting close. The clock is starting to run down. We're getting close.

E. LOVELESS: Absolutely.

SPEAKER: I ask your patience, your co-operation.

E. LOVELESS: If you need a ride out, let me know.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of getting back to the fishery because we all talk about cod and how important cod was yesterday in this House, but I want to talk about the aquaculture piece. As I said, there are three fish plants in my district, and one in Harbour Breton, the product is salmon that's been grown by Mowi, operated by Bill Barry. Same thing in St. Alban's, which is resurged, I call it, in terms of employment, and now rainbow trout is being processed through the plant. The minister is going to be impressed when he goes down to see what's down there.

Then you have Hermitage, Cooke is doing the salmon as well. I'll always say, Cooke, during COVID, never missed a shift. They invested in what was required of the Health minister at the time, or the restrictions, they worked with them and kept the people employed. Lot of investment – there are millions of dollars, hundreds of people being employed down there. It's a success story down in Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, for sure.

Then you have your wild fishery, Mr. Speaker. Crab is not the fish, if you want to put it that way, down in our district. It's lobster. Lobster has great value, but they do have some small bits of crab that supplements their overall year of living. Then cod and halibut as well. Hopefully cod – I saw some prices come out yesterday that were determined on cod. I still don't understand why cod wouldn't be more valuable in terms of a dollar figure because of how value it is to the economy.

My time is up, but I do have more to say in terms of what was a missed opportunity for my district and then I'll get a chance at some other point to talk about tourism in my district. We all know that *The Mummer's Song* came from my district. Bud Davidge – listen to his song. I say to everybody when you go tonight, listen to it or when you're

driving out to Exploit's, listen to it. *Can't You Understand That* – listen to the song, great song.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: I say to the hon. Member, Bud Davidge is playing in Mount Pearl tonight, so I will be listening to him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to stand here and have a few words on the budget itself, to explain some of the situations that we're facing out in Corner Brook and the Bay of Islands.

First of all, I thank the people from Humber - Bay of Islands again for your support and your help and guidance along the way and, of course, bringing up issues that we can try to get resolved with the new government, and I respect that.

Speaker, I just want to speak again about the *Baltic III* out there in Lark Harbour. They're going ahead now and trying to start with the salvage of the *Baltic III*. I just have to recognize the search and rescue, Coast Guard, the women's group at the church, all the volunteers, the council who helped out over this potential tragedy – which no lives lost, no major environmental disaster in the area and now they're into the removal stage.

With everybody working together, there were some issues that we all raised, with our opinions on how things should be done, but the experts, of course, guided the whole process. As of now, from my understanding, they're starting a bit of work out there now to start the initial process of salvage of the ship.

Be safe everybody and I'm sure I'll be out talking to people. To all the residents of Lark Harbour, York Harbour and all the staff of search and rescue and all the staff of the Coast Guard, thank you very much for all the work that you have done to help move this process along.

Several big issues in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands, the biggest one is health care. I've raised this issue in this House on many occasions. I asked the minister in Question Period and the Premier, before the election, about nurse practitioners. Now that nurse practitioners can bill MCP, it is a process to get in the queue to do that and there are guidelines set up. I'm just delighted that there are some taking advantage of that process, the nurse practitioners. That would take the pressure off a lot of people who have to go to the emergency department.

The emergency department, as we all know, not just in Corner Brook, in many other places, there's usually an excess of people wanting to get into the emergency department for different reasons, some just to get a prescription filled. That causes the big backlog.

So I say to the minister and the government, nurse practitioners are a big part of helping with the backlog of the emergency department. For residents who don't have a doctor, this would help a lot. The commitment was made and the commitment was done. I just look forward to expanding that so more people would have access to primary care rather than go to the emergency department.

The second thing, Minister – and I thank the Minister of Health for the frank discussions on it – is there are approximately 45 to 50 long-term care patients in acute-care beds. That causes the bottleneck and a backlog also in the Corner Brook area. We had discussions, and I asked the question yesterday, to get the 45 beds, it is going to take a year or a year and a bit to get them.

We had discussions after on that because I said, well, can we find a quicker way? So the minister – I give her credit – has agreed to set up a conference call or a meeting with her senior staff to see. The issues that the minister raised are legit. But people who know me will say, okay, is there a way to get around this? Is there a way that we can make this happen quicker?

The minister agreed to have a meeting with her staff to see if we can make some way to have this construction done. I thank the minister again for that. If there's a way we can make it quicker, I'm all for it. If there's not, I understand the situation, but I'd like to have my input because I know that there were 45 beds in construction, it took about six months.

Now the minister brought up some concerns, like the roof and other things that are legitimate concerns, but if it's some other way that we can try to work around it, that will take away a lot of pressure on the emergency department in Corner Brook. Many people who should be going to acute-care beds are now put in some room four or five or six. I know personally because I've visited family members there, there are eight and nine down where they used to do rehab because there are no beds available.

This would alleviate that a lot, I say to the minister. I look forward to the meeting and the discussions to see if there is some way we can get that done. I'll say to the minister, thank you for taking the initiative to do this because it's something that we really needed done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I'll get back to health.

The next biggest issue out in Corner Brook, right now, is the housing. We've been working on this for a long time, on the housing situation in Corner Brook for a number of years.

I say to the people, we always heard about the one that was set-up here, the 106 Horizon. There's one in Corner Brook also. I know myself and the minister spoke, I know they're working at getting some support in that hotel itself, but there are major concerns there, just putting people in – I think there are 45 residents – here's your lunch bag, here's your supper and now you've got your room and board with no services which some of them need. Some of them need counselling. Some of them just need a roof over their head. So that's a big issue in Corner Brook that has been brought up on many occasions.

I'll say to the minister, you're new at it, you're new at the housing, but I will tell you that your energy and your commitment is beyond reproach. I have to say, I've dealt with you and I know I've dealt with the Member for Grand Bank, also, when he was the Minister of Housing and he did everything he could to help out, also. Now, with a new government and the minister – just to let you know and I'll be upfront – we had meetings just a few days ago with somebody who wants to come in and help with the housing, to build units. I asked the minister for a meeting and two days later we had the meeting with these proponents. I know that they're going to be working back and forth to set-up some. And not just in St. John's. They're looking at all across the province to help out.

Again, to the minister, it is a big task. It is a big task, but I think you're up for the task. I don't think it, I know you're up for the task and I know the government has made a commitment on the housing issue across Newfoundland and Labrador. I can tell you now that anything I can do in the Corner Brook area, just count me in because it took me about a year and a half to convince one minister that there was a building dilapidated and closed down. It took me almost a year to convince him and the only way that it finally hit the media was when the media took a picture of me standing in front of the building. Then they realized they

had a unit up there – 32 units – it had to be demolished because they let it go without getting any repairs done to it. It had to be demolished.

Even now, there are some units being put there. There can't be as many units as there was – 32. I think there are 20 going there now. There can't be 32 put there because the old water and sewer was put there back 40 or 50 or 60 years ago. That's something that we have to look at also, putting the infrastructure out in the City of Corner Brook, or somehow to get it done. So there's lots of room there to build more units, but the infrastructure is not there, then it's the cost.

I understand where Housing is coming from, that to put in the infrastructure, all underground, new water and sewer, that takes away a lot of money from the housing building itself, where you can build another place. I understand that. So we have to work on the infrastructure also, areas where you can build social housing for people across the province, especially in Corner Brook.

I just want to recognize the minister and say thank you for being so energetic about it and so open about it and committed to it. I'm confident that there's going to be a lot more housing units for people in Newfoundland and Labrador than before. Too bad it had come to a crisis, but it was a crisis. Gradually, it will relieve, not just in St. John's, but all across. I know the Member for Corner Brook understands the issue in Corner Brook also, about the concerns in Corner Brook also.

This is not just a single issue for me or the government. This is an issue for all Members here who have an issue with social housing in their district. The Member, the former mayor of Corner Brook, he understands the issues also. This is where we got to come together – independent, Liberal, PC – put our minds together, get it altogether ourselves and let's work on a

plan that we, in our own areas, can help out with housing. I'm all for it and I know the Member for Corner Brook is all for it also. I definitely know the minister is for it.

So I'd like for all of us to get together sometime to work together to find alternatives that we can help out in Corner Brook. That's going to help all of our residents. So I'm putting out an olive branch for all of us to get together and try to work together, and if we got to work with the City of Corner Brook who I'm sure will work with us in housing.

This is what we need to do. We'll have our time bantering back and forth. There are times we got to come together and this is one of the times when we all can come together to help people out. I'm certainly willing, I know the Member is, so we just need someone to start the initiative.

Minister, you're the minister, so any time that you're free when we come back after the break, I'd like if you could arrange a meeting with the Member for Corner Brook and myself so we can discuss the issues in Corner Brook. I know you're well aware of them, but we may be able to bring up a few more things.

J. WALL: Absolutely.

E. JOYCE: The minister agreed to that and I knew you would, and I thank you for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I think we should bring in also the other Member in the Corner Brook area also. I think you should be involved, too, with this.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

While I appreciate the spirit of co-operation, address the Chair, please.

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I was addressing you because I was going to bring you up

next, if you let me finish my sentence. You should have said, and that's your buddy.

I think you have great input also and you have concerns in your district about housing. That's one way that four of us should come together and see what we can do. Because what's happening in Corner Brook is going to help the people in Bay of Islands. What's happening in Bay of Islands is going to help the people in Corner Brook and the people of Pasadena, Massey Drive and other areas.

Just for the record, one-half of the District of Humber - Bay of Islands is Corner Brook. So it's not just the North Shore and South Shore, half of it is Corner Brook.

Minister, when we get back and, on your schedule, of course, I'd like for the four of us to get together and have a chat about the housing, what we can do. It may take a while, but at least we'll come together. This is a big issue.

J. WALL: We'll line it up.

E. JOYCE: We'll line it up. Thank you, Minister, for working on that, for the four of us to have a very frank discussion on it.

Those are the two major issues in Corner Brook: health care and housing. When you get down in the Humber - Bay of Islands area, the roads are an issue. I know there was some work done last year. I had many meetings with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I had many meetings with him and he's been very open. I had several meetings with him, working with Transportation.

As I said before in this House, Mr. Speaker, you can't get everything you're going to ask for. You just can't do it because the needs are so great. I've always said what you need to do is take care of safety first. Once you take care of the safety, then the rest will fall in place

I have to, again, mention the minister, him and his staff have been very open on working with me and some of the town councils in getting the priorities worked on. I'm more than confident that there will be improvements in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands, Route 450 and Route 440, working with the minister and the commitment that has been made, and that the roads will be safer.

The other concern that we've got to watch out for is the *Baltic III*. There is speculation that some of that steel is going to be brought out to Stephenville by truck. If that happens – and we don't know how many loads. We don't know how many is going to be out on barge. It's a heavy load on the Route 450, on the South Shore of the Bay of Islands. There are going to be some on barges. Apparently, there is going to be some on truck. When one estimate was had, it was about 2,500 trucks going out over that route. I'll just say to the minister, keep a few dollars back just in case we're going to need some repairs because of that.

The Minister of Finance is looking at me very attentively. I hope you can squeeze a few dollars if we need it with the road. Because the boat has to be removed. They're going to do it in the safest way and there may be some conditions of the road that needs to be fixed after.

The next one I'm going to bring up – and it's something that I've brought up a lot – is Crown lands. I'll say to the minister that there are issues, but I will be upfront and be honest. Every issue I've brought up, we sat down and tried to deal with. There are some we couldn't get done yet – yet. I don't give up too easy, but any time there was an issue with Crown lands – and you've heard me in this House on many occasions, that one of the biggest concerns people have is Crown lands.

The dialogue has been opened. The door is open. I talked to the minister regularly on this here. There have been three or four

cases that were stalled, that have been successful, gave us a path forward to get it done and there are some that we're still working on.

I'll just give an example. They're waiting for the decision on one. The reason why the decision is not made is the minister is waiting for me to take a picture so you can have the proof because there is so much snow there. That's the kind of co-operation with the minister. It's not me. It's the people that it is going to affect. I've just got to recognize that because that was such a big issue.

You're not going to get them all. There are going to be some that there's just no way to get it through the proper legislation and the rules and regulations. I understand that, but the vast majority, you can take them one at a time and try to get it put through.

The dialogue is there with the minister and the office. I don't know if people in this Chamber knows it. There is a designated ADM just for Crown Lands. That person, now, can take the files, work with the staff in Corner Brook and go through the process. Before it was Corner Brook, then the minister. Now there's a designated person for Crown Lands in the minister's office that is working on the files.

So that's something that's great to work with. I know when I come in back in May, I'm going to have another four or five files that we'll sit down with and the minister already agreed that anything we got to bring up, we'll work on it. I'm very appreciate of that also, I say to the minister.

The other smaller thing that's there is the infrastructure funding, some for capital works –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

E. JOYCE: I'll just speak a bit louder, Mr. Speaker.

For the infrastructure, again, there are some towns there I know – we are working on one in Gillams. The minister didn't make any commitment, but he's working on it to get it done for the Blivet station, which has been ongoing. The way it started out was wrong and the minister is working on it.

There's a lot to the infrastructure program because now with Transportation – and we had this discussion. The engineering department now – they used to be Municipal Affairs – is with Transportation. I'll ask the easy question: What's going to take the priority, some town with 400 or 500 people to get their water or sewer, or some school or bridge?

Once you look at the reality of it, you realize a lot of small towns, when they had the engineering in Municipal Affairs, they could always phone the engineers in Municipal Affairs because they are designated for the communities. But now they're in that big department – the massive department. I was always against it, moving Municipal Affairs and infrastructure to Transportation and Infrastructure, because the smaller communities across the province would be the ones that's going to fail and get less service.

I don't know how you can work on that, but there has to be some way that you can work on that because it is the small communities that's being affected by the move who don't have access to the engineers in the department. Once you get a major construction and you got the engineers on that, it's hard to take them off to work with the smaller towns on their infrastructure.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is winding down. I'll just say, again, to the Members opposite, anything I can do to help out in the

Corner Brook or Humber - Bay of Islands area, just count me in. I definitely don't expect you'll get everything I asked for, which is happening. I expect to have doors so you can at least express the views of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly always a pleasure to rise and indeed an honour to rise in this House and represent the good folks in the historic District of Burgeo - La Poile. This time of year, especially, we're starting to see the sun come out more. The weather is warming up. The snow is melting and it's always exciting, especially, in our rural communities. It's like a sense of coming back to life after a long, harsh winter. We're seeing the boats go out of the harbour a bit more. More people getting out and about in our communities. It certainly highlights the tourism season that's ahead – our summer tourism, especially. That's something that I'm going to speak about here in the House of Assembly, especially during the budget process.

I have to say, as a new Member here in the House of Assembly for a first time, the budget process is certainly an interesting part of the House here and our business that we conduct here in the House. It's been very insightful to be a part of this process for the first time from the debate in the House and listening to the Minister of Finance deliver his speech and the Estimates process, as well, where we get a chance to speak to the ministers and their staff and departments and talk about line by line items in our Estimates book here. I have to say it's been very enjoyable for me.

I know for some people that probably don't seem like it to them, listening to a Budget Speech and being a part of this process, but as a political science student and now a politician, it's certainly been an exciting part for me to be a part of this process and to learn so much during that time. I'm looking forward to multiple opportunities to talk about a number of issues, concerns and opportunities in my district.

I always end with that, Speaker, opportunities, because I believe Burgeo - La Poile is an important part of this province and can play an important part in growing our province. When we talk about the tourism sector, the opportunities that are out there for that area. It takes in a coastal area, of course, as I've highlighted to a number of times in this district, accessing some by the highway, a lot of communities connected in short distances, but all different in their aspects, all offering different things to visitors to our province. I'll certainly get into that a little bit more during my time speaking today.

I also want to talk a little bit about what I believe is the missed opportunity for this budget. I understand we hear the support from the government on their side, obviously. This is their budget. I do believe that there are a lot of missed opportunities in this budget for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I don't want to get into the rhetoric a lot, but I did come across a post as I was doing my normal doomscrolling in the evening when I get a bit of time at the end of the day, which I'm sure most of us do, and I saw a post from the government, from their party social media, and it just struck me because I look and see, it was the 2026 and 2016 budget comparison.

Speaker, I find it very hard to believe that was the road that we were going down and comparing first budgets, I guess, was the intention. I look at the line under the 2016 side, it was: raise HST 15 per cent. Well, for

the record, it was former PC Premier Paul Davis who actually raised the tax to 15 per cent. So the previous government – I can't say we because I was not a part of that government – the previous government maintained that tax because of the over \$2-billion deficit that was left to them when they took office in 2015.

I would say that if the comparison is trying to be made that that budget was so bad because of the deficit that they were left, I would argue that the arguments that they are making now is that their budget is so good because of the foundation that was left to them, Speaker. They're arguing that their budget is so good and trying to compare that the 2016 one was so bad; well, I would argue that if it was that bad as they indicated, it was because of what was left to the previous government in 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: One of the parts that's mentioned in the Budget Speech is the foundation, our strong foundation is the exact word. Economy growing faster with 5.5 per cent expected GDP growth. Household income is forecast to grow by 2.6 per cent. Retail sales are forecast to increase by 3.1 per cent. Housing starts are forecast to increase by 3.9 per cent.

Speaker, I would argue that did not happen over a couple of months. There was a foundation that was set for this government. There were actions that were taken and I think it is a bit disingenuous to say that there was nothing done sometimes over the past 10 years. There was a lot of work done. There were a lot of challenges faced over the past 10 years that the governments had to address.

No government is perfect, I obviously acknowledge that, but I do believe that these numbers that were mentioned in part of the foundation, it was because of the investments, it was because of growth that was being developed and that is what was

left to them. We're seeing some of that reflected here in the Budget Speech.

I understand there are deficits and debt to address. That has been, by numerous governments over years and years and years here. I think it was mentioned in the previous time that there have been two surpluses over the past – God knows how long. So we understand the fiscal challenges that are in this province but we have to acknowledge also what previous governments have done and to set-up for this government in their budget as well.

Speaker, one part that I really wanted to start with, because I kind of couldn't believe it when I heard it to be honest, and I'll read it here for the record. This is quoted from the Budget Speech: "But, Speaker, Budget 2026 will go one step further and includes funding to develop an approach to revitalize rural Newfoundland and Labrador, for all of us. This will be implemented region by region to ensure rural and remote communities are not left behind and that the voices of those who know them best help shape the path forward."

Well, Speaker, in the District of Burgeo - La Poile – and this may be no shock to my colleagues here, especially on our side – the voices of those who know them best help shape the path forward. Well, let's talk about the feasibility study on the National Marine Conservation Area.

I know that's probably no surprise to a number of colleagues, but I still want to bring it up because it is an important aspect of my district. The voices of those who know them best – and I'll say to the minister, actually, I just heard a chirp there – over here on this side of the House, I can't speak for that side, but we respect each other on this side of the House and the districts that we represent. We respect our difference of opinion sometimes on certain matters, but we also respect that we represent districts and we represent issues that are important to the people of our province.

I know it has been tried to be put out there that I don't support the fishing industry, that I don't support the aquaculture industry, that I'm trying to not support that industry. I will say unequivocally here in the House of Assembly that is not true – not true.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: I've said in the media. I've said it to the public. I've said it to the residents that I represent. Before I get into details, I've had so many conversations on this feasibility study, I cannot tell you, especially in the Burgeo and Ramea area. Some very heated conversations, Speaker, I will say. People are very, very passionate about this issue on both sides of this issue and I understood exactly where they were coming from. I've said to them and I've said to the media and I'll say it here again today, if, when that study was finished, it was going to be to the detriment of our fishing industry, to industry that's the economic growth in this province – no, I would not have supported it – would not have supported it. I've said to the harvesters in my district. I've said that to those who are trying to grow their industry, absolutely, would not have supported it.

I know the signatories would not have supported that either, but it goes back, it was a feasibility study. Let's go back, way back to the beginning, over 20 years ago. Speaker, 20 years ago a community-led initiative, something that was started by the people in their community, looking at the options that were available. In the face of a cod moratorium in '92, as was mentioned by my hon. colleague, I wasn't around then, but that was when the conversation started, looking at what their community can look like in the future, looking at the opportunities that were available to grow their local community, to grow the tourism economy, to still protect the fishing industry and those who want to be developed. Those were things they were looking at and were trying to develop.

So the conversation started a long time ago and it took a long, long time to get to a point where everybody would agree to study it, Speaker.

That is what it was. It was a study. But it was from the voices of those that know best in their community. It was not something that was started by a provincial government. It was not something that was started by a federal government. It was started on the ground, in their community, and it was a study. That is what it was. It was still a study when this government came into power, but the disappointing part is that this government made in what I believe, in my opinion, a short-sighted decision to cut that study off where it was.

Because it wasn't finished. There was still ample opportunity for the government to have consultations with all five signatories of that conservation area – every single one of them. A lot of times, they say they have four years in government. They could have taken the whole time to figure it out, to have lots of conversations with our harvesters, lots of conversation with our community members, all the signatories that were part of it – the federal government was a part of that signatory as well – to continue that study, to get to a point where we could have a full scope and a full layout of what it would look like for the future of the area and my district.

We didn't get that opportunity. As I just said, and I will repeat again, if that final layout came and it was going to be detrimental, harmful to other industries, the fishing industry and anyone that wants to see growth in our communities, no, I would not have supported it. As I mentioned, I don't believe the communities would have supported it, as well.

But what potential that also could have been for that community and that area. In addition to the conservation area, the federal government was looking at a tertiary park, which I'm also not sure a lot of people know

about. That one is the provincial Sandbanks Park and the province now were looking at turning that into what is called a tertiary park. So it would be a national park under the federal government, but not a full-blown national park like Gros Morne.

That would have seen significant investment into that area and upgrades in site upgrades, in water upgrades that run through the park. So millions – millions – of dollars that that area does not see that would have been to create an opportunity for visitors to come to our province and see what we have to offer on the Southwest Coast. Millions of dollars that the federal government was willing to put up to help the people in Burgeo and Ramea, that opportunity is gone again because of, what I believe, is the short-sighted decision of this government.

To finish that study would have laid out what the future would have looked like for that area. It was a project that was rooted in local engagement and widely seen as a meaningful opportunity for economic diversification. That's what we always talk about here. We hear, on the other side, about new industries that are being created. Economic diversification is super important for rural communities as well.

There are opportunities but they're not massive opportunities that are out there, so you have to find the ones that you can build and grow on. Especially in an area like Burgeo and Ramea that is off the highway, 150-kilometre stretch of road on Route 480, sometimes it is not the easiest for people to visit there. Sometimes people may look at that as an obstacle, but we want to give them the opportunity and give them a reason to go there, to give them a reason to see what we have to offer. I believe there is so much potential in that area, and this was one of those things that we could have done to help.

It was not about limiting development. It was not about that. Once again, back to the

feasibility of a conservation area that would offer, especially in the tourism industry – as one of the main things that we hear from the government to be the tourism capital of Canada, well, what a great opportunity that would have been. What a great opportunity to build on that. What a great opportunity we would have seen to drive people to the Southwest Coast of this province, which I believe has an immense amount to offer to this province and our visitors to this province.

I mean, in my district alone, not to mention that area, but Port aux Basques is the gateway community to this province. The Trans-Canada Highway via Marine Atlantic begins in Port aux Basques. When people visit our province – besides Argentia, of course, in the hon. Member's District of Placentia - St. Mary's, but outside of our summer months, that is the first place that people get to when they arrive in this province. So we want to see investments in that area, our roadways. I've had conversations about a project that was announced in the past, a 30-kilometre extension from Port aux Basques heading out to our highways.

We want to make sure our highways are safe and have the capacity to not only handle commercial traffic but our passenger traffic, especially in the months that are coming. We know the amount of visitors that are coming to visit here in this province now, thanks also to the federal government who cut the cost to travel on Marine Atlantic. That's seeing an increase in visitors wanting to come to our province.

So we need to make sure we're investing in the areas where people arrive first and make sure we make a good first impression when they arrive. To say, well, look at this province, the great roads that we have, the great opportunities we have, the great visitors we have, the great things we have to offer. Port aux Basques is building on that industry as well, creating opportunities and different businesses for people to interact

with and go to. Supporting our grocery stores and building up our communities to make sure that we welcome visitors. Because, as I mentioned, they are leaning into that industry heavily to make sure our communities and our area continue to prosper.

But I will go back to the conservation area again a little bit. I just want to emphasize how disappointing it is that we did not get the end of that study. The end of the study would have laid out what a future could look like, as I've mentioned just previously. Someone heard me say this week, listen to their words, but judge them on their actions. Where I would argue that, this will be implemented region by region to ensure rural and remote communities are not left behind and that the voices of those who know them best help shape the path forward is in complete contradiction to the actions that they took when they got into office – completely opposite to what they did. That is their actions and we will judge them upon their actions, not only their words.

Speaker, I had wished that we could have had the potential to have more conversations on this conservation area. I had wished that we had more time to consult with the community and the individuals in those communities, as I did. I had wished that the Premier had actually visited the community when he made the announcement during the campaign. I wish that he had spoken to them prior to just letting them know that he was cancelling, so he could have heard from the people in the communities that started this process, that were trying to protect their own future, to see what their future looked like, to see the potential. I only wished that he listened to their voices then. He didn't listen to their voices then and he's not listening to their voices now.

In my little bit of time that I have left, I want to say, what are we looking for in our rural communities? We want our rural

communities to continue to thrive. I know to a lot of people out there – they may not say it publicly, but we know the sentiment is out there. They probably wish that a lot of rural communities in this province didn't exist to save money, to move everybody to the Avalon area. No offence to anyone that represents the Avalon, of course. All areas of the province are important, but we know that that sentiment is out there in people in the province. We know that it exists. People in rural communities hear it all the time.

I could say to those people, they have been never more wrong in their life because rural Newfoundland and Labrador defines this province. It created this province. It created the traditions that we have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: It is the best parts of our province that we have to offer. I know I'm a little biased, of course, but that is what I believe.

How are we supporting those communities? What are we doing to give them the opportunities that they need to thrive? What are we doing to support them? We've had many conversations in Estimates, last night, especially, about grants and programs. The smallest of things sometimes in these communities – especially, I represent some communities that are less than 500 people. Some grants and opportunities that they get that probably are \$2,000. That may not seem a lot to a community or a group in St. John's area, but that \$2,000 goes a very long way and is very appreciated by those groups because it helps them support our seniors, it helps them give our youth opportunities to have fun in the summer months or enjoy an activity in the winter. It helps build community. It helps bring people together. Those are the things that we are looking for in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'll go back, in the little bit of time that I have, when I heard the minister read that paragraph, it really disappointed me

because, as I mentioned, to not continue with the feasibility study on the National Marine Conservation area was short-sighted, it was disappointing and I think it was also disappointing to the people in my area who were looking to see and were being their own voice, telling the province, telling the federal government what they want, what they want to see in consultation with everyone.

Was the process perfect? No, it was not perfect. I know it wasn't, as I've mentioned I've had so many conversations on this but I do believe there was still a path forward to that.

As I mentioned, we have respectful dialogue here and I know other districts were disagreeing with that and that's okay. That is totally okay. Not everybody had to agree with it, but we need to see a final plan, a final layout that could have been the plan for the future of this area and my district.

That decision that the government took to end that was disappointing. It was disappointing to the people in my district and I believe that it contradicts the very words that the minister had read in his Budget Speech.

I look forward to more opportunities during this budget debate to talk about other areas in my district, to build on tourism, the roadwork in our district and the investments that we are looking for to continue to build on those opportunities for the District of Burgeo - La Poile.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

When you're getting up in your first opportunity to speak to the budget, it is really hard to know where to start because when you represent rural, despite the tremendous strides that we've made, the progress, there are still lots of needs yet to be met.

I did enjoy listening to my colleagues all afternoon. You know, when you look at the make up of the boundaries across this province, the footprint, we do all have different challenges. Speaker, whatever you deal with in your constituency in Mount Pearl - Southlands is going to be quite different than what I deal with up on the South Coast in Labrador. We can almost divide it down into urban and rural.

I really enjoyed listening to the Member for Burgeo - La Poile just then. He's new to the House but he's been around the game a long time. He's doing a tremendous job representing his district.

One of my favourite things through the years was when you represent a district, you know the needs of that district or you should. If you're doing your job, you should know, in every community, what needs to be done and you should be building relationships with the people, et cetera.

Oftentimes we forget, when we're going to the ministers. I was doing it with my own folks for a long time. I need this, I need this and you kind of forget that there are hundreds of communities and everybody has got needs. I remember the first time I went, when I was the Housing Minister, out to Burgeo - La Poile to do a housing announcement. I had two or three hours before my flight back out of Deer Lake, the MHA of the day said, I'm going to take you for a little run down through my district. We went through Rose Blanche and Diamond Cove and Harbour le Cou and Burnt Islands, where my colleague is now from, and in every town, he was mentioning things that were needed in that area. It opens your eyes and it broadens your

appreciation for the demands that are there, for sure, that is why we have to prioritize.

Today, I am going to stand, I am the provincial critic for Health but I'm going to leave that. I'll have an opportunity after break to speak to that and I'm going to mainly focus on Labrador and, in particular, my district, Speaker. In particular, a beautiful district and a beautiful people, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. I could take three hours talking about what Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair has to offer. Do we have more needs? Yes, we do.

Tomorrow night, if all goes well, I'm going to be in Port Hope Simpson for the first graduation of this season and then I'll start and we'll go every weekend until June, hitting all the graduations because I love spending time with the young people. Prior to my 13 years doing this, I spent 23 years as a career and employment counsellor. My heart is with the youth, always. They're not our future; they're our leaders, today. They're doing incredible work. I actually have a group in right now from L'Anse au Loup, Shark Tech, who've gone on the international stage two or three times now in the last few years.

So, Speaker, the Member for Burgeo - La Poile talked about righting a record – getting it on the record, some right information. I wasn't going to go here today but I am. I'm going to take five minutes to right the record, to put in *Hansard* forever. It comes up in the House again and again and again and it's not right. It is not right in any lifetime.

The Opposition, the government of the day now, they ran the campaign and there were lots of memes and lots of mistruths, lots of really terrible things but the one that came up again and again, people who know me, know what I stand for. They know what I take pride in. They know my integrity and to see my face again and again and again that I voted to give myself a raise, was wrong. Let *Hansard* show for everybody that reads

Hansard from now to the rest of time, I did not vote to give myself a raise.

I would ask the Premier, today, of Newfoundland and Labrador to get up and explain the voting process at a Cabinet table to the people. I would ask the Premier to get up right now if what I'm saying is wrong. There are no votes at a Cabinet table, and they know that, but they misled and that's disingenuous.

So for the sake of my reputation, my character, out of respect for my grandparents who raised me, I can't let that slide.

What I will tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is since I have been serving I had one opportunity to vote on whether MHAs got a raise or not and that was when the Members' Compensation Review Committee came before House Management, televised live, it was public, and the recommendation was for an increase.

Myself and the now leader – I'm thinking about his district – Windsor Lake – was myself and the Member for Windsor Lake and the Member for Mount Pearl North and we voted against, on record, we voted against. The Member for Bonavista and the Member for Torngat and the Member for Conception Bay South voted for.

So I need to get that out there, to clear the record that I never did vote to give myself a raise. Do I work very hard? My husband tells everybody, I get \$2 an hour. My phone doesn't go off. I travel to my district every – my colleagues know, 20 hours the other day travelling back. I got elected five times because I am all in. While I am doing this job, I am all in. My phone is not turned off.

I had a school situation, my phone was ringing at 12:40 in the morning from a parent, something going on with their student. I might have a community like Black Tickle that are calling you regularly on

a Saturday or Sunday. I am not the MHA that works nine to five. I am not the MHA who turns here phone off on the weekend. My phone is on and the ringer is never down. I am all in working hard for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, today, I think I'll just focus on the Estimates from this morning in Labrador Affairs. I did thank the Member for her time. Three hours went fast. We didn't get through not nearly a fraction of the questions that I had, but it is really, really important in a democratic process that when a government of a day brings down a budget, that then each department can go through line by line by line and we can ask the questions.

What happens, Speaker, is for people on the outside they might say, what is Estimates? I didn't know myself. One thing I knew before I came into this job was advocacy. I knew how to advocate for things we didn't have, but in terms of the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch, all of that stuff, I didn't know that. That's not the world I came from. I never aspired to be here, actually, but I knew inadequacy. I knew all of the shortcomings that we had in Labrador. I knew that our people needed a voice – and many brilliant people in Labrador, not everybody wants to put themselves forward. You surround yourself with those people and you get the privilege to be their voice and to bring their concerns forward.

Budget Estimates, there may be a line item of a program that we had put in place that was very valuable, well received and then if we get into budget and we notice that now that program is \$200,000 less or \$300,000 less, then we get to ask the government, why did you cut the program? Did you move it somewhere else?

One of the things that we talked a lot about this morning was the Air Access Program. I

do believe that governments are not to be in the business of the airline, but we found ourselves in a place in Labrador where we have one company and the service is gone almost rock bottom. It is having an impact on rotational workers. I had a guy tell me of the last nine times he travelled from Lab West to Blanc Sablon, he was disrupted seven times. I had a pharmacist tell me the last 16 times she rotated in and out of Lake Melville, she was disrupted 13 times. Most concerning was the pharmacist that spoke to me at the baggage belt, 2:30 on Tuesday morning, middle of the night, and they're now not getting their medication. That's concerning.

So that means that the government of the day needs to continue – we were working with the company, letting them know we expect you to be a good corporate partner, you're doing lots of work on behalf of government and this is not acceptable to leave the people stranded like they are. We had extensive conversation on that this morning with the minister, and we did put an Air Access Program in place; \$3.5 million. It had never been done.

When there is a pilot program put in place, that means that we're going to do a review at the end of that and we're just going to look at where we can make improvements. I kind of did scratch my head when I read the blue book during the campaign, that we're going to scrap that program. We're going to scrap the Liberal Air Access Program. It's no good. What we see, we come out with – and I learned additional information this morning. Not only did the program go from \$3.5 million to \$2.5 million and it's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's getting kind of hard to hear the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: It's all the same. The airline did have parameters. The airline did say

that we needed a two-week advanced notice. There was nothing we could do with that. That was what the airline required.

So I am glad to see that there is an Air Access Program Pilot continuing. The minister did say if there was someone that didn't use their two tickets by the end of the year, they're going to be able to use their two tickets this year and two more, which means an individual can get four. That's really positive news and I thank the minister for that. I hope that they're going to do something to promote that.

I'll certainly promote it. I can't wait to get back on the ground tomorrow, because I'm covering a lot of communities this weekend and I'll certainly be promoting that you can now get your four tickets if you do need them. Also, I would encourage – and I know the Minister of Labrador Affairs said this morning, she's going to meet with the company. She understands the challenges in Labrador. She's going to meet.

I would also encourage the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Arts to meet with PAL, as well. She might have since I met with her. I don't know. I met with her in the wintertime and she had met with some airlines, but not the one and only airline for Labrador. So I would encourage her to do that because it is so, so important.

Right at this time, I'm going to pause my speaking on the budget and I'm going to enter an amendment. Today I have been speaking on the main budget motion and I'm going to bring in an amendment to that main motion.

I move the following amendment, and my amendment is on the main motion and seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, and folks can follow along. It's Motion 1, right in your Order paper.

I move that all the words after "that" be deleted in the motion before the House,

Motion 1, and the following words be substituted: the House faults the PC government for its failure to deliver on its promise of lower taxes for all of us; its failure to deliver on its promise of better health care for all of us; and its failure to deliver on its promise of safer communities for all of us.”

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We will now briefly recess the House to consider the amendment.

Recess

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Are the Members ready?

I have considered the amendment, and I find that the amendment is in order.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

That's a really positive note to end the day on before we head off for constituency week that the amendment of all the faults that we found with this budget, on all of the things that the PC government failed to deliver on, is certainly in order. So that's good news. I didn't list all the faults because I only had a few minutes, Speaker. So that's good.

In the interest of time and seeing the hour of the day, I'll have more to say on this later, Speaker, as will all my colleagues, but, right now, I'm going to adjourn debate on the main motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Lake Melville, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that this House 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.

Before I adjourn, Members are reminded that the Resource Committee will meet in the Chamber tonight at 6 p.m. to consider the Estimates of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change and tomorrow morning, at 9 p.m. to consider the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Members are further reminded that the Social Services Committee will meet in the Chamber immediately following constituency week on Tuesday, May 19, to consider the Estimates of the Department of Health and Community Services.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, May 19, 1:30 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.