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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 Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: I rise in relation to a point of order that was raised before the House broke for constituency week and, in relation to that, I withdraw any comments directed through that point of order.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The Moose Hide Campaign is a grassroots movement of Canadians committed to protecting women and children and speaking out against gender-based and domestic violence, grounded in Indigenous ceremony and traditional ways of learning and healing.

The inspiration for the Moose Hide Campaign came to co-founders Paul Lacerte and his daughter Raven in 2011 during a moose hunt on their traditional territory along a section of highway where dozens of women have gone missing or have been murdered.

The symbol of the campaign is the moose hide pin representing solidarity and taking a stand against violence towards women, girls and two-spirited plus individuals, supporting reconciliation and honouring Indigenous culture.

Since 2018, the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature has annually recognized the Moose Hide Campaign with commemorations that include Members of the House of Assembly beginning the day with reflection and prayer in the Chamber and wearing the Moose Hide pin during proceedings.

This year, the national day to mark the campaign took place last Thursday, May 14.

Unfortunately, due to the sitting schedule of the House with last week being a constituency break, we were unable to commemorate the campaign on that day. However, the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature will continue to mark the Moose Hide Campaign again this year with commemorations in the fall 2026 sitting.

As Speaker, our Legislature's continued participation in the Moose Hide Campaign is an important commitment to reconciliation and taking a stand against violence towards women, girls and two-spirited plus individuals.

I encourage all Members and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to visit moosehidecampaign.ca to learn more about the initiative and making the important commitment towards what it represents.

Over the past few days, we were all saddened to hear of the passing of another Newfoundland and Labrador music icon Mr. John Hutton. Today, his life and legacy will be the subject of a Member's statement.

In that regard, I wish to acknowledge his wife Caron, her sisters Dana Hawco and Tracey Rowe, as well as two of John's bandmates Bruce Blackwood and Billy Sharpe of Billy and the Bruisers.

Welcome to our public gallery this afternoon and please accept our sincere condolences on this tremendous loss.

Rainbow Riders is also the subject of a Member's statement today and we have several of their members visiting the public gallery as well.

Welcome Erin O'Rielly, executive director; Marvin Chaulk, chair of the board; Charolette Ackerman, clinical social worker and equine facilitate mental health practitioner; Madison Janes, senior therapeutic riding instructor and barn manager; and Audra Murphy, finance manager.

Welcome.

Mr. Wilfred Hunt, also known as Wilf, subject of a Member statement, and his partner, Bonnie Hudson, are also visiting the gallery today.

Welcome.

We also have several members of the Singing Legionnaires, which is the subject of a Member statement visiting our gallery today as well.

Welcome to choir director, Elaine Bown Stamp; pianist, Noreen Greene-Fraize; choir president, Ron Neary; choir treasurer, Thomas Hickey; as well as a number of other choir members.

Welcome to our gallery and certainly thank you for your service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Finally, we have two visitors from the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Family Physicians in the gallery today, representing family doctors as part of a ministerial statement.

Welcome to Dr. Elhamy Samak, president, and Dr. Shanda Slipp, director of external engagement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear Member statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Scio, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, Waterford Valley and Windsor Lake.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, today I rise to celebrate a special organization in Mount Scio, Rainbow Riders. Under the leadership of coach and rider, CEO Erin O'Rielly and

board chair, Marvin Chaulk, Rainbow Riders supports individuals with disabilities in our province. With 23 horses and over 300 weekly volunteers, the small but mighty team delivers therapeutic riding and mental health programs to over 200 clients weekly. School visits, Janeway referrals and community partnerships increase the reach of this amazing organization.

Their programs include Pony Pals, where 5- to 10-year-olds learn horse care. Rookie Riders helps 6- to 12-year-olds with ground-based introduction to horse riding. Open Trails is an unmounted program that addresses mental health needs. Horse Discovery facilitates personalized programs to help participants advance, meeting them where they are and Pink Pony Club allows adults to interact and care for therapy horses.

Taking care of horses and equestrian facilities is a significant endeavor. Fundraising with signature events, such as a Derby Day in the Barn, the Ride-A-Thon and Hoedown in The Barn, leverages community support to supplement Rainbow Riders' income.

Please join me in thanking the staff and volunteers at Rainbow Riders for improving the lives of children, youth and adults 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.

Today I rise to acknowledge a beautiful choir family with a passion for singing. The Singing Legionnaires are avid volunteers who go above and beyond to entertain their community. With 17 active members, these fine gentlemen, and a couple of ladies, volunteer their time at seniors' homes,

schools and community spaces. Chairperson Ron Neary – the group’s baby – is one of two in their 70s, with an average age of 81½ years young.

Formed in 1967 by a group of veterans who loved to sing, the original members comprised World War II veterans, Korean Conflict and Peacekeepers, while others are relatives of veterans and hold an active membership in the Royal Canadian Legion branches in or near St. John’s. They entertain by singing popular wartime songs, plus songs from the 1920s through to the 1970s.

They perform at the War Memorial at the Battle of the Atlantic, July 1, November 11, the annual flag raising ceremony at Confederation Building and an occasional visit to Government House. The choir takes pride in visiting local schools and churches leading up to November 11 in support of the poppy fundraising efforts for veterans.

While the Singing Legionnaires veteran members have reduced dramatically, they always welcome new members for those interested in social development and cherished camaraderie.

Honourable Members, please acknowledge and thank the Singing Legionnaires here today. I’m so proud of the work that you do in community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, today, I’m honoured to rise for Maxwell “Max” Kirby, who passed away on January 22, 2026, at the age of 103.

Max lived an extraordinary life defined by dedication and community spirit. A husband of 62 years, a father, a grandfather, and a friend to many, he touched the lives of countless people across our province.

As an athlete in the ’30s, Max excelled in track and field, earning more than 40 first place finishes and multiple records. He was inducted into both the Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Hall of Fame and the Newfoundland and Labrador Athletics Association Hall of Fame, a testament to his commitment to excellence. Beyond athletics, Max was a committed member of the Church Lads’ Brigade, by mentoring youth for decades while fostering values of character, leadership and community that are endured today.

In recent years, many knew Max for his walks at the Field House and his belief that movement and connection are keys to longevity. I had the privilege of visiting Max on his birthday shortly before he passed away and was deeply moved by his wisdom and genuine care for others.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this hon. House, I honour the life of Max Kirby, whose legacy continues to inspire us all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to note the passing of a person who helped shape the music industry in this province for more than 50 years.

John Hutton passed away on Friday surrounded by people he loved. In the days since his passing, there have been countless stories shared from musicians who John mentored and helped along their own musical careers.

John came from a musical family and, from an early age, his talent stood out. His passion was rock and roll, performing in bands like 12 Gauge and Billy and the Bruisers for the last 35 years. John was a co-founder of what is now known as MusicNL. He owned Hutton’s music store. He also founded the province’s very own

music download website, another way to promote local artists and musicians.

Those who knew John were familiar with his sometimes shocking sense of humour, and those who were there say he was true to form in his final moments. John also made many personal connections in real estate and travel, but off stage it was his wife, Caron, who stole the show. John was a devoted husband and life partner.

Speaker, I ask all Members to rise and applaud John Hutton.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Wilfred Hunt has been a familiar and reassuring presence in Airport Heights since 2005 when he retired as a mechanic and began serving as a crossing guard.

For more than two decades, Wilf has safely guided generations of children to and from school with unwavering dedication, kindness and a warm smile. In 2014, his extraordinary commitment was recognized nationally when he received the Canada's Favourite Crossing Guard award. Rain, snow or sunshine, Wilf is always at his post, offering a friendly wave and a kind word to every child and parent he meets.

Now 77 years old, Wilf continues to serve his community with remarkable energy and enthusiasm. He also shares his love of music by performing at the seniors' club, bringing joy to so many.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in recognizing Wilf Hunt for his outstanding service, his selfless dedication and the lasting impact he has made on the children, families and the District of Windsor Lake.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Our provincial government recognizes the important work of family doctors. Today is World Family Doctor Day, a day I am pleased to stand here and celebrate with you all. Our doctors have long been at the heart of community medicine, especially in our rural communities.

When you consider the level of skill, education and practice required to become a family doctor, I am pleased to announce that we intend to work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association to begin the process to formally recognize family medicine as a specialty in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: We also reaffirm our commitment to address overhead for our fee-for-service family doctors who work outside Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services facilities.

Family doctors play a crucial role, serving on the front lines of our health care system and I'd like to recognize one who exemplifies this role: Dr. Andrew Hunt.

Dr. Hunt practises family and emergency medicine in his hometown of Twillingate and is Assistant Dean of Distributed Medical Education at Memorial's Faculty of Medicine. In recognition of his service to rural communities for 10 years or more, he recently received the Rural Service Award from the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to stand and join me in applauding and wishing all family doctors and the College of Family Physicians a happy World Family Doctor Day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I join the minister in recognizing World Family Doctor Day and in thanking family doctors across Newfoundland and Labrador for the essential care they provide to patients and communities every day. I acknowledge Dr. Hunt, who is here today, and I congratulate him.

Today is an opportunity to celebrate the dedication and professionalism of family doctors, but it is also a reminder of the challenges many face in accessing primary care. Thousands in this province remain without a family doctor and communities continue to struggle with recruitment and retention, including my own district, Speaker, where there is not currently a single doctor in the entire district on the ground.

That reality underscores just how important family doctors are to the strength of our health care system. They are often the first point of contact for patients and they deserve support that matches the demands being placed on them every day.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement and formally recognize family medicine as a speciality. We also take this opportunity to thank family doctors across the province who, for many, are the primary link to the whole system. That's why we're dismayed to hear from so many about the problems we're facing with the rollout of CorCare.

We call on the government to do more to support family physicians in their practices so that they can see more patients and not have to deal with endless paperwork, whether physical or virtual.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Speaker, today I rise in this hon. House to recognize excellence in workplace health and safety and to congratulate David Mills, recipient of Safety Leader Award from the Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Association.

The association held its annual health and safety conference and trade show in Gander earlier this month, bringing together workers, employers and safety professionals from across the province to promote injury prevention and safer workplaces.

The Safety Leader Award recognizes individuals who lead by example and demonstrate that putting safety first can save lives and prevent injuries. These leaders promote safe work practices, inspire others to be safety-minded and help build a

strong culture of safety that protects workers, families and communities.

David Mills, a powerline technician with Newfoundland Power, exemplifies this leadership. By consistently putting safety first, planning work carefully and supporting others to do the same, he sets the standards for responsible and safe work.

Supporting healthy and safe workplaces is key to building safer communities. I thank the association for its leadership and ask all Members to join me in congratulating Mr. David Mills on this well-deserved award.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, I join the minister in congratulating David Mills on receiving the Safety Leader Award from the Newfoundland and Labrador Occupational Health and Safety Association.

Recognition like this matters because workplace safety depends on people who are willing to lead by example every single day. Workers across this province deserve to return home safely to their families at the end of every shift, and that only happens because of individuals who take safety seriously and help build strong workplace cultures.

While we celebrate leaders like Mr. Mills, we must also recognize there is still much work to be done. Workplace injuries, violence and safety concerns continue to affect workers in many sectors and we all share a responsibility to ensure workplaces are not only productive, but safe and supportive as well.

Congratulations, again, to Mr. Mills on his well-deserved recognition and thank you for

your contribution to workplace safety in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

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.

We also offer congratulations to Mr. David Mills and to all the leaders promoting safe and healthy workplaces. The burden of ensuring safe workplaces doesn't just rest on individuals. We have to put measures in place that encourage safe practices by the employers, too.

That's what we, once again, call on government to publish all occupational health and safety inspection reports on its website so that employees and the public can hold workplaces to account in promoting safety.

Once again, congratulations, Mr. David Mills.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Today is a very important day for Newfoundland and Labrador. We get to watch the Montreal Canadiens for another couple of weeks –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: – thanks to Newfoundland and Labrador’s very own Alex Newhook. We’re all so proud of Alex Newhook. So I say to him and everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador, Olé, Olé, Olé.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: And while we don’t agree a lot with the other side of the House, I ask the Premier: Finally, is this something you will agree with me?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, that is the best question I have heard in the entire period of the House of Assembly. I couldn’t agree more with the Leader of the Opposition on the Montreal Canadiens and Alex Newhook. Not once, but twice, he scores the winning goal in game seven.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: I think, as we’ve said before, Newfoundland and Labrador always pulls above its weight and Mr. Alex Newhook is certainly doing that with the Montreal Canadiens.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I’ll absolutely agree on Mr. Newhook. The Montreal Canadiens, not so much.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

In all seriousness, it might have been the best question, and it’s the first time we probably got an answer as well. But we will move on to serious things, Speaker.

The Premier promised he would table his review panel’s report on April 30. That

passed, and he delayed it to May 19, saying the panel would present their findings and, more importantly, that the panel would answer questions. He flipped on that, and now he has said that they will not be answering questions.

I ask: Why won’t the Premier insist the authors of this report speak to it?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, when the panel presented their report to us on April 30, I asked the panel to present its report. They agreed they would do it. They emailed back to say they would do it, and they subsequently told us that they wouldn’t do it. They would simply allow the report to speak for itself.

They are an independent panel, and I do not control their actions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the information that was given to the public was that May 19 was specifically chosen because the three panel members would be in St. John’s. The Premier needs to be transparent and tell everyone.

So I ask again: What were the reasons that the authors of the report gave for not making themselves available?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: I’ll add to what I said earlier. When the panel was asked when they would be available to be here in St. John’s, May 19 was the date that was given to us as the earliest day possible that

allowed us, again, to do our review that we needed to do of the report.

At the same time, the panel subsequently said they wouldn't be available, and they would let the report stand for itself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I'm sure they'll all be available at some future date, so I ask: Will the Premier commit to making the authors of this very important report available to answer questions to the MHAs and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the Independent Review Committee has finished their work, and if they choose to do something different, they can certainly do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I ask the Premier: As the Premier of this province, will he insist that the people that were paid for this report, with taxpayers' money, that they make themselves available so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can get the answers they deserve from the authors of this report?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I have said, the report is available. The report will be tabled later today. One of the things that we should note, in this report, compared to

many that have been released before, the amount of redactions is very limited.

As a matter of fact, the only redactions in this report relate to an action that was taken by the previous government that wouldn't release a report to the public of Newfoundland and Labrador, so any reference to it had to be redacted. That's the type of thing that we're doing, open and transparent, with a full report that anybody can see.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I think it's very clear to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that this is a stark contrast between this government and the former Liberal government because the former Liberal government, when it announced the MOU, it had a full debate in the House of Assembly with not only negotiators –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: – but the experts who provided advice on that report.

A promise was made by this Premier that the panelists would be available to speak to the report. Why is the Premier not being transparent about this report?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I asked. They said no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I ask: Did the Premier say I am the Premier; you were paid by taxpayers' money; you will make yourselves available?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Once again, Speaker, let me talk to the report that was presented today. Let me talk about the report that we've talked about, the action that we are going to take as a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are moving forward and we will be looking for more –

L. STOYLES: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Mount Pearl North for your co-operation.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We will be looking for more power, we will be looking for more value and we will be looking for more transmission. That's exactly what we're focused on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Having just got the report very recently, I want to make one important note about why it's important to hear from the authors. They have said that they are not releasing the names of the individuals that they spoke to in the interview to get the information for the report. So not only do we not know who they've spoken to, the authors will not speak to what information was provided to them.

How are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians supposed to trust this secret report just because there are no redactions in it? They need to make themselves available to the public. This is the Premier of the province, the leader of the province, the person now responsible for the most important deal in the history of the province.

Will he insist that the authors of this report answer to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, they have fulfilled their mandate. They have delivered the report to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We will follow the recommendations of that report as we move to improve the previous agreement that was reached and we will get a deal that will develop the Upper Churchill and the Lower Churchill and electrify Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, for the sake of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, why isn't the Premier worried that the lack of transparency, the lack of openness and the complete sham of this process will undermine public confidence in whatever deal he may or may not reach on the Churchill River?

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.

I'd like to thank the independent review panel for the work they've done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: The Member across the way would understand –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – fully that these committees don't generally come in and testify in front of the House. He, himself, sat on the LeBlanc inquiry for a number of months and we never asked Justice LeBlanc to come into this House and testify. It's not the norm.

The Premier asked them to come. They identified a date. They said they would be here. The day was scheduled around that time. On the 19th, prior to coming, they reached out and said they would not be coming. That's out of our control. They're independent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the minister is right; I did sit through the Muskrat Falls inquiry and it was titled *A Misguided Project*. Who misguided the project? Jerome Kennedy who is now negotiating the project, and Danny Williams who said this MOU was dead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So I ask the Minister of Energy: What is the plan to develop Churchill River and are we going to rely on people that already cost this province an unnecessary \$13 billion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I'm hoping that the Member read the report this morning and understands that they were going to leave the people of this province with \$30 billion in debt. They tried to spin it and say that it was a billion dollars a year, but there's one other thing I'll say – and he just admitted it. He sat on that panel for months. Yet, when they came in here, last January and we were supposed to debate the MOU, which wasn't a debate by the way, he refused to listen or implement the LeBlanc inquiry recommendations.

So he can come in here and talk about it all he wants, the reality of it is this independent panel are now dissolved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: How convenient is that?

Speaker, the Premier said earlier today that he is not tearing anything up. Does that mean the Liberal MOU will continue to form the riverbanks of future negotiations?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I have said, for more than a year, this is not about blame. This is not about anything except getting the best deal for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: That is why we've established a new negotiating team and that

is why we are moving forward with negotiations, to get better value, to get more value, to get more transmission and to make sure, at the end of the day, that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are the principal beneficiaries of any deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, when the Premier was questioned about a referendum today during his press conference, he wouldn't commit to actually holding a referendum, despite the fact he made that promise during the course of the election.

I ask the Premier today in the House of Assembly: Is he still committed to providing a referendum on the Upper Churchill deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the first thing we have to do is get a deal. We've never had a deal. We've had an MOU. Clearly, we have an outline now we're going to follow and use this report as a framework for working towards getting a deal that will benefit all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. More power, more transmission, more value and we're going to keep doing it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to hear the Premier confirm that we never had a deal, what we had was an MOU. Despite the fact that they were saying different things in the House of Assembly over the last few weeks.

Is the Premier confirming now and does he agree that the MOU was only a backbone and there were still negotiations to do before we got the definitive agreements on this MOU?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I can confirm is that the Member opposite wanted to rush out and turn the MOU into a deal. They didn't want an independent review done. They talked about an independent review, but it wasn't independent.

We also understand and know full well the interference of the Members opposite, the former premier and his Cabinet, with the negotiation strategy that went on that actually put items in the MOU that would have cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador \$30 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised independent experts, but instead delivered a known critic whose numbers had to be corrected, an architect of Muskrat Falls and secretly appointed the Danny Williams era Cabinet minister who was Natural Resources minister for the sanctioning of Muskrat Falls, who famously said that Muskrat Falls is a project that would actually pay for itself. He said that. That's what Jerome Kennedy said.

To be honest, I'm not surprised he couldn't get them to say worse things about the MOU. Why does he expect the people to trust anything this pre-determined panel has to say?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would say to Joey's Liberals over there that this deal was Joey's deal. So if that's what they want to get on with, the rhetoric about people from the past, they need to consider exactly what this deal would look like had it gone through.

It would revert to nothing any different than what the Churchill Falls deal was from 1969. They came in here; they didn't want an independent review panel to look at it –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I only want to hear the person identified as speaking.

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: They didn't want the independent review panel. They talk about the people that were on it; Mr. Wilson was appointed by them. They didn't have any problems when they appointed Mr. Browne. They know full well that this is independent and clear.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Speaker, it's ironic that Mr. Wilson didn't mind talking about the MOU and how bad it was in the election campaign. But then when it comes time to talk about his own report, he's afraid to stand up and defend it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: He was on *Open Line* shooting off his mouth about how terrible the deal was, and now he won't speak at all.

Is the Premier comfortable with allowing the potential opportunity of this magnitude for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to be jeopardized based on a report whose authors won't even answer basic questions; they won't show up here like our experts did a year and half ago?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: The experts that they provided from J.P. Morgan and Power Advisory actually recommended against the 2 per cent increase that they put in year over year – the increase that would cost \$30 billion to Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayers.

I would ask that Member over there, while he was in Cabinet, did he support it? I'm willing to bet he did. The same idea as what they did with their secret pay raise. They approve this stuff and they do not back it up when the time comes. If they want to talk about transparency –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: If they want to talk about transparency, they ought to look within. It's something they failed to do, they've always failed to do, and their hot tub time machine only works in one direction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite talks about this all the time: the secret bonus. Nobody on this side voted for a secret bonus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: Nobody received a secret bonus. The only person who is getting a bonus is the Premier's political advisor who takes his paycheque from MCP –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: – and follows the Premier around all day long advising on health, apparently. By the way, we are still with Joey's deal in 1969 because the Premier turned his back on \$1.4 billion –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: – that we would have gotten on May 1, and the \$227 billion in potential income.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Speaker, the Premier finally has the report he asked for, likely with the recommendations that he asked for, but it took seven months.

What's the plan now, given that seven months of negotiating has been lost?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, from last December up until October when the election was over – that, in my mind, equals to be about 10 months – they did nothing. So they can sit here and talk about what we've done in the last seven months.

The other thing I would say is the Member across the way, did he support the 2 per cent escalation clause? Because I'm sure that the premier would have brought that back to his Cabinet at the time and they would have had that discussion.

So if they supported that, then they intentionally hoodwinked the voters of Newfoundland and Labrador, and then they tried to convince them that this was a good deal, that there was no repercussions, that there would be no debt owed at the end: \$30 billion.

It was misleading, it was misrepresented and he probably supported it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Speaker, what is the Premier prepared to give up in negotiations in order to get more power? Because when he said he may talk about changes to the deal, the Premier of Quebec, Christine Fréchet, said as well –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: – that there would have to be something that they would get in exchange.

What's he willing to give up?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: He's not willing to give up the future of the province.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: That's exactly right.

Speaker, what we're not prepared to do is we're not prepared to simply turn over and sign a deal that would have handcuffed

Newfoundland and Labrador again and had another repeat of the 1969 deal.

I have spoken with the Premier of Quebec. She is fully aware of what we are looking for and what I've asked for in terms of more transmission, more power and more value. I have spoken with the prime minister who is also very interested in the opportunities for development in Labrador.

So we're looking forward to negotiations and getting the job done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, it's nice to hear that the Premier is finally picking up the phone to talk to these people.

Speaker, has the report been shared with Hydro-Québec and, if so, what do they have to say about it?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, apparently, they never heard the question.

F. HUTTON: My mic is on there now, Speaker.

Speaker, has this report been shared with Hydro-Québec and, if so, what did they have to say about it?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the report was made public today and I have also already asked our chief negotiator to reach out to the CEO of Hydro-Québec. I've also shared the report with the Premier of Quebec.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. PARSONS: Speaker, when I asked about changes to the Multi-Year Capital Works program, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure told me I should do my homework. Well, the funny thing is my numbers align perfectly with the affected communities and MNL. The three-year funding over four years means \$2.6 million less for the seven municipalities affected.

Will the minister consider some time of stop-gap measure to address this mistake?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

First, I want to make clear, it wasn't a mistake. I made the decision with a clear mind. It was a mess when I entered the department and it is not a mess anymore, thanks to the changes we brought in. This will make this funding program a better program with transparency.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It got parameters and it got rules, something it never had before when the previous administration used it as their own personal slush fund. I refuse to let that happen. Now we have parameters around it and it will be a better program for years to come and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: They're rowdy today, Speaker.

I make no apologies for making a smart decision.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: I disagree with the hon. Member there that this is a slush fund in any way. It's a very valuable program for municipalities. That was in the PC blue book that there would be more Multi-Year Capital Works. Not only is this program less money, but it's going to start intake a year later, on April 1, 2027, which means no projects will get designed or completed during the next construction season.

The minister says he recognizes the need to get tenders out early. So will the minister consider doing intake earlier so municipalities can get shovels in the ground?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I made it clear to all mayors affected. We are going to try to do earlier tendering, and I've committed to doing to that. I want to make something clear to the Member opposite, because he's playing with the truth and he knows the difference.

Speaker, \$40 million is sitting on the books that's not been used. Those municipalities that say they've been hurt, they're not. They have \$40 million for this year that they say they have no money. I'll tell MNL they have \$40 million that they're not using. They need to get it out the door by 2027, and we will get earlier approvals out in fall this year, and

they'll have their money for April '27 to start new projects next year. All factual information.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, is it the minister's position that we throw out the baby with the bathwater here, that because a few municipalities can't get their funding out, is it because of training gaps from Municipal Affairs? Are there other ways that this could be done so that the funding can get spent?

Are the seven municipalities that are still in the program, do they have \$40 million outstanding? I doubt it.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I tell the Member opposite, we have towns in this province in some of that seven, and some of that old (inaudible) towns – some of the towns that were in the 22, they've had money there since 2017. It was incumbent upon us as a province, me as a minister and us as a department to start getting money out the doors.

If MNL want the infrastructure projects, well, spend the money. We're going to help you spend the money. Get it out the door. There's lots of infrastructure money with the federal government. We're working on that. Towns have been notified. They've been explained all this information. So the story you're making there is not a story. This is a better program. I stand behind it, and if you want to see –

J. KORAB: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Waterford Valley for your co-operation.

B. PETTEN: They're very rowdy today, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Your time has expired, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, failure to consult seems to be a pattern of this government.

Why did the Conservative government announce the closure of Horizons 106 without first consulting with one of the key partners responsible for operating the facility and supporting its residents?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Horizons 106 is funded until December 31 of this year. The former administration put out an RFP saying that it was going to be closed and replaced.

Mr. Speaker, we will have our homework done. Right now, the team at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has met with End Homelessness St. John's last week; they're meeting again this week. We will have those discussions. I'll tell the people of the province, there will be no one left behind at 106 Airport Road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, if End Homelessness St. John's was caught off guard by this decision, how can people have any confidence that there is a real transition plan in place for the 75 people who are currently residing there?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

End Homelessness St. John's should not have been caught off guard. They were well aware of what was happening. They even put in a proposal, Speaker.

Right now, we have a plan going forward. That plan will be shared when it's solidified. All partners will be brought to the table for that discussion.

I can certainly tell the people of this province that everyone at Horizons at 106 will be looked after and will be cared for with wraparound supports after December 31, 2026.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, we have heard from residents, and we see online, an increase in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units being used as trap houses.

What is the minister doing to address this issue?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

One of the Members opposite just said shameful. It was shameful what was done for so many years before we came into this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: With respect to trap houses, Speaker, we are working diligently with the Housing Corporation and with the RNC to make sure that we are closing the trap houses.

It's very difficult and, as the Member opposite can appreciate, it's very heavy when it comes to emotions when people are in these situations. We are doing our part. We will ensure that we can work with the people of the public to make sure the trap houses are closed and to provide safer communities for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, according to people who are contacting us and what's online, trap houses are putting people in harms way. Families need these units.

Why won't the minister do something about these trap houses?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I've had conversations with Members opposite regarding trap houses. I did not

have any email or correspondence from the Member regarding a trap house.

Speaker, we are doing our part. We're going to work with everyone that we can to ensure that these trap houses are closed. As I said, it's a very difficult process, as you can imagine, but we are doing our part. We are not taking it lightly and this government will ensure that the safety of the people in the public, regarding those trap houses, will be made better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the previous government held three days of debate in the House of Assembly –

AN HON. MEMBER: Four.

J. DINN: Four – in which we had access to experts involved in the negotiations including J.P. Morgan, Power Advisory and others, all of whom could have chosen not to attend. Opposition parties even received extra funding to hire their own experts.

So now the Premier tells us the panel that he established has chosen not to present and then report and answer the questions.

I have one simple question: Is this a case of the tail wagging the dog?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let's talk about facts. Let's talk about what exactly has happened here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Let's about the fact that a signed MOU was brought into the House of Assembly. What we have now is a report that is open to everyone. Everyone in the public in Newfoundland and Labrador will have this report. If the Member opposite wants to ask questions about the report, we'd be more than happy to listen to him, but I will tell you that we are interested in moving forward. This report outlines significant deficiencies in the MOU but we're going to make sure that we focus on more power, more transmission and more value.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Unlike last year, we have no knowledge of the experts consulted by the panel. In fact, we have no ability to question the committee or the experts that they consulted.

So how exactly is this transparency and how exactly does this inspire confidence in the independence of the committee and its finds, if they avoid scrutiny?

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.

It's funny that he would ask questions like this, given the fact that he supported the previous panel which was quite biased.

At the end of the day, when these panels report, the independence is theirs and theirs alone. We never see any of the

correspondence from these independent people, not one little bit.

He can talk all he wants about last year and how it was. We have clearly said that we're not tearing up the MOU. The MOU is the framework for what we are doing going forward. This report lays the foundation that supports the good and the bad inside of that MOU, because if they had read it, they would have seen that the report isn't all bad. It does say there are some good things in there. So what we are going to do is utilize that in order to get the best deal for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, government, when they were in Opposition, had a chance to form the previous panel but they walked out. Actually, they walked out on the vote. They turned tail and ran.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: The Premier has said that partners can come to the table and negotiate with us, however, the Independent Review Committee lists four Decision Gates, five recommendations the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador must make. In fact, Recommendation 5 calls for the preparation of "a fully articulated negotiation strategy and best-practice governance process."

I ask the Premier: What is the timeline for these decisions and recommendations to be completed before partners can actually come to the table to negotiate?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, since we received the report on April 30, we have already started the process. We've already started the process of developing what the negotiation strategy should look like.

L. STOYLES: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I say to the Member for Mount Pearl North, you need not rise to speak anymore today, you won't be recognized.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what we have done, as I said, the report talks about making sure that we set-up the appropriate committees. We're in the process of doing all of that. We've already started to look at the economic opportunities for this province. We've engaged with officials from Energy and Mines and Finance to make sure that was done, because that was something that was missed in the previous report.

Maybe the Member opposite, should have taken his time before he decided to stand up and say yes.

SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, this report is based on a lot of likelies in determining that the MOU was not in the best interest of the province. The IRC noted that the Churchill Falls Power Purchase Agreement does not include access to Hydro-Québec transmission to markets beyond the Province of Quebec.

Now, given the unsuccessful past history of court challenges, how likely is this to happen, really?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the truth is it couldn't happen because of the 1969 agreement that a former Liberal government put in front of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we were saddled with for more than 50 years –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – and that's exactly what we're doing, Speaker. We're going to negotiate and we're going to make sure that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – the people of Newfoundland get the transmission they deserve, get the power they deserve and get the value they deserve.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to table the report of the Independent Review Committee titled, *Creating Long-Term Value from the Churchill River for the People of Newfoundland and Labrador*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's motion, which will be seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville:

WHEREAS social media continues to play a significant role in the lives of children and youth, often exposing them to cyberbullying, harmful content and online exploitation; and

WHEREAS parents, guardians, educators, mental health professionals and child advocates continue to raise concerns about the effects social media can have on development, mental health and well-being of young people; and

WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba has announced plans to introduce legislation to ban social media and AI chatbot access for youth under the age of 16, while other jurisdictions around the world, like Australia, France and Norway, have move toward stronger protections for children online; and

WHEREAS in 2025, the Liberal government recognized the harm excessive cellphone use can have on students by implementing restrictions on personal electronic devices in

schools, measures which educators have reported are having positive impacts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to consult with parents, guardians, educators, youth, mental health experts and technology professionals to develop measures that prioritize child safety, privacy and healthy development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to examine legislative and regulatory changes to restrict or prohibit access to social media for children under the age of 16; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House call upon the Government of Canada to work with provinces and territories to establish national standards to better protect children online.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

In accordance with Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's motion referred to by the Member for Windsor Lake will be the private Member's motion to be debated tomorrow, Wednesday, May 20, 2026.

SPEAKER: Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Order, please!

During Routine Proceedings on May 7, 2026, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board rose when Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given was called from the Order Paper. The minister used this time to speak to certain statements that had been made by Opposition Members respecting the Future Fund, the Air Access Program and other issues. At that time, I advised that I would

examine how this section of Routine Proceedings was intended to be used

In the *Members' Parliamentary Guide*, on page 21, it is stated: "During this proceeding, ministers may answer questions which have been placed on the Order Paper by submitting them in writing to the Office of the Clerk. Ministers may respond at their discretion, either verbally or in writing (document is tabled) and there are no rules respecting timelines for a minister to respond."

Standing Order 26 on Oral Questions also recognizes "that if in the opinion of the Minister to whom a question is addressed it requires a lengthy answer, he or she may require it to be placed on the Order Paper"

There have been past rulings on the nature of Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given. On December 6, 1989, Speaker Lush determined that a minister answers a question when notice has been given but noted that it has happened in the past that ministers have clarified an answer given the day previous, particularly with agreement by Members.

On May 15, 1991, Speaker Lush again considered the nature of this routine order, finding that the purpose is to address questions which are too complicated, too detailed and will take too much time of the House. He determined that when a minister is giving the answer, when he is tabling the document, that it should be as brief as possible, because that is the reason why it was put there, and there should be no debate during this point of Routine Proceedings.

In practice, Speakers have commonly given latitude to ministers to respond to questions raised in debate regarding which they have not had answers immediately at hand, and respecting which they indicated they would find the answers and report back to the House.

In these types of questions that are intended to be addressed during Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given, it is not intended – I emphasize, it is not intended – to be a continuation of debate. It is meant to provide an opportunity to answer a defined question that has been posed, preferably one that has been placed on the Order Paper.

I ask that all Members keep this in mind in the future.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

My petition deals with the Town of Epworth and road repairs.

These are the reasons and background for this petition:

WHEREAS the Town of Epworth is serviced by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and road conditions in the area are deplorable and require immediate paving and remediation; and

WHEREAS residents are concerned about their safety when travelling on these roads; and

WHEREAS children travel this route to attend school; and

WHEREAS emergency and personal vehicles are using this roadway daily; and

WHEREAS the residents of this community must travel for all services in the region; and

WHEREAS the roads in this community are deteriorated beyond simple fixes;

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 provide funding to implement changes that specifically address the issues facing the people of Epworth. Immediately, we'd like to have the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure complete an assessment of the area and provide a plan to repair and pave the area and meet with the Local Service District to address their concerns.

Speaker, I visited Epworth this week during constituency week. Epworth is a beautiful little town. It's located in the District of Burin - Grand Bank on the Burin Peninsula. Its residents are really concerned about the state of the roadway there. This section of highway is just off Route 220 and was scheduled to receive some paving and repairs during this construction season when we finished up Route 20.

It's important to note that there's only one way in and one way out of Epworth. The residents are quite concerned because emergency vehicles have to get in and out. Their concern is the brush cutting in the area, as well. Like everybody else in this province, we are concerned about forest fire season. The Town of Epworth has nowhere to go. We really need to make sure the roads are in good shape so they can get out and we need to make sure that brush cutting is done.

Kids travel by bus on that route. I mean, it's so important that we do something with it. What I'm asking the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure today – all we're asking is he send out officials. The people from Epworth are watching me today because they know I'm on doing this petition for them. What we're asking is officials to go out there, take a look at the road and decide a course of action to remediate it as soon as possible.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

Access to justice is a fundamental right of all Canadians. The closure of the Provincial Court in Port aux Basques has created a significant barrier to justice for residents of the Southwest Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. Community members involved in civil and criminal matters are now required to travel long distances to attend proceedings, creating hardship for individuals, families, witnesses and legal professionals.

The courthouse also served as a local point of access for a range of justice-related and government-supported services, including matters involving family law, fines administration, peace bonds, legal aid interactions and other processes that rely on in-person attendance. Its closure has reduced the availability of these services in the region, resulting in delays, increased costs and disproportionate impacts on vulnerable residents.

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 reopen the Provincial Court in Port aux Basques to restore accessible, timely and locally delivered justice services for residents of the Southwest Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, I would note, I have signatures here from Port aux Basques, Cape Ray, Doyles, St. Andrews and Isle aux Morts. This is a very big issue for many of the residents in my district still. As we know, the courts closed many months ago, last fall, and we still do not have a plan forward,

especially for the court in Port aux Basques, for residents of my district to have timely access to these very, very important services.

I'm hearing stories of challenges in Stephenville as well, where residents in my area would have to travel to access a lot of these services, so there is a significant gap here. We were told to wait for a working report. We got a working report that told us what they already knew. We are not seeing the investments in the budget that are addressing those challenges as well. The courts are not opening back up to help the people access those services that they need, and it seems like the minister is now trying to wipe her hands from it and say it's the court's problem.

I would certainly encourage the minister and this government to get involved. It should be their priority to help the people in my district and the people in Newfoundland and Labrador have timely access to justice services. It is important to them and it should be important to the government as well.

I certainly urge the minister to take some responsibility, get involved in this issue and get the court in Port aux Basques back open for the people in Burgeo - La Poile.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 4, Bill 16, first reading.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 16, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, be read a first 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 is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000," carried. (Bill 16)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 16)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 16 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 5, Bill 17.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, Bill 17, and I further move that the said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, be read a first 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 is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2," carried. (Bill 17)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 17 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 6, Bill 18.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law, Bill 18, and I further move that the said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 18, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law, be now read a first 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 has been carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law," carried. (Bill 18)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law. (Bill 18)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 18 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1.

I believe the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair will be continuing on from – you have time left?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I understand I have 59 minutes and 24 seconds left. So let's see how that goes. I'm nursing a little bit of a cold.

It's nice to be back in the House, Speaker, and I trust that everybody had a productive time during the constituency week they were away. I have a lot more information here today than I'm going to get through over the next hour. But, given today is another date that we're going to remember in our province for a long time, I just got to start with a few remarks on what happened today with the release of the report.

We have a report: *Creating Long-Term Value from the Churchill River for the People of Newfoundland and Labrador*. There was a panel that was put in place following the election. One of the individuals, Michael Wilson, and now a pretty known name in our province, was on the panel for the Liberal government. During the election, he talked a lot about what was wrong with the MOU and then he moved on.

Now, seemingly today – we all just got this, so we're going to take some time to read the report. I'm not sure how many pages the report is even. I was in Health Estimates all morning, so I literally have just seen it. It's an 89-page report that we are going to sift

through that was put together by the architect of Emera, the guy from *Muskkrat Falls: A Misguided Project*, who did a great job getting a good deal for Emera, and then we have another individual there.

Speaker, I've just heard about it a few minutes at lunchtime, but I will share some of my thoughts. I'm kind of having difficulty getting past the fact that you've got the Premier of the province that stands and tells the people that there is going to be a date when the panelists are available and, all of a sudden, we learned right before the long weekend – and I was on the move over the long weekend. Like many of our colleagues, I was on the West Coast and different places carrying out some commitments. Everybody was talking about this. Is that true that we're not going to hear from the panel now? But didn't you guys – yes, we did. We opened the House in January. We had experts on the floor for four days; take all the time you want; ask all the questions.

So right now we have three individuals that had said yes, we will. You would think when they signed up that they were told that this will be a part of your job, your tenure before you're done. We want you to answer questions on the report. Not only did they not answer questions on the report – I was checking to see who was in the scrum area and I don't think the government is out in the scrum area today either answering questions.

Speaker, that is concerning. Given that I came in on the heels of Muskrat Falls, what a tumultuous time. I can tell you, my home is a stone's throw – the entire thing was a mess. I could talk about this and nothing else for only the next hour.

Even when I think about Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the mess with the community development agreement and the mess that that community was in that are still seeing the impacts today. Everything from the Italian company that showed up in February and never had a clue what they

were doing, and on and on it goes. Our local people who couldn't get work, and me going over to Nalcor with a pile of résumés under my arm because that's the work I was in and I knew they were qualified. Everything about that, from the government of the day who's in power now, and now coming with this next big project and the people who put together the report are not even going to answer questions.

I do have to wonder, had they gone before the mics today and had we said so the basis of the MOU is there and you agree, that's good, I think they would have said yes, that's good. So you also know that as we worked through definitive agreements there was no deal on the table; we were not locked in anything – I believe they would have said yes, that's good.

I believe the government of the day did not want the panel people to tell us the things that were there that were good. That's the conclusion I drew. The Premier has said I'm not tearing anything up. We're going to use that now as a basis to move forward.

So, at the end of the day, we've all said that we will support the best deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. I represent and I come from a place in Labrador that needs electricity. I had people reaching out to me after my interview, the day the House broke, actually telling me that the outlook for IOC right now is very bleak. People that work there say there's no way to avoid job losses. People that are saying, would you ask the Government House Leader if he will support reducing industrial rates for IOC, so that maybe we can save some jobs, and all kinds of information that was coming at me on that.

They do need electricity; opportunity is there. I don't believe that they can wait years and years and years. We're moving on now to a new panel that was put together today. It is very interesting that the CEO of NL Hydro, when the Liberal government was negotiating, she sat at every table and

said this is the best deal and she is now on the new panel.

Also, Jerome Kennedy who have been talked about quite a bit. Barry Perry, I will say, is a reputable man. I know Barry, but now that this has become pretty political, you've got to wonder how much overstep and how much he's going to be able to say. Those are just my thoughts, as I've just become aware of this as I come out of Health Estimates this morning.

Speaker, I was surprised when the Premier stood in Question Period and said I asked them to speak to the public and they said no. That's not like me asking, as the Opposition House Leader. That's the Premier of the province who took the taxpayers' money and said we're going to pay you big money to do this. It's very important and, at the end of the day, they come back and say here's the report. No, we're not going to explain anything. We're not going to tell you who we talked to. We're not going to give you any names. We're not going to tell you any stakeholders.

That's very concerning. So what do we know? We are being asked here to 100 per cent trust the process. There is no accountability or transparency here. There is none. We're being told to trust the process. You were here, Speaker, when I was here with Muskrat Falls, when Bill 29 – I talk about it and I think about it and I was so new to all of this. I was kind of following all the media and it got national attention for being a very draconian piece. They wanted this project to go. We're going to cover everything up. Then the Government House Leader of the day – I believe he's back on the payroll, too, now; I see him around a lot – invoked closure, and we went through a really difficult time.

Seniors in this province – we talk about seniors all of the time. Seniors who paved the way for us, they are the ones that are struggling now. They're struggling with affordability issues. I don't know where they

would have moved – into the malls if they had any in their communities – had we not gone after Muskrat Falls, secured the \$5.2-billion loan guarantee in Ottawa, had we not got the \$500 million every year that goes into preventing rate shock.

That is why the people have to have answers. It's very, very concerning when you've got something as transformational, something as massive as we're talking about, a world-class asset. We're talking about the development of a world-class asset – something that is very technical, something that is very complex. We had worked on an MOU. We were nowhere near finished, unlike what the folks on the government side wanted the electorate to believe. We were nowhere near finished – 10 definitive agreements. We were not locked in.

It was not like Joey's deal that many leaders in the past had tried to open and couldn't. There were off-ramps to that. There were escalator clauses. There was all of that. Now we have three people, with a political history, attached to the misguided project and we were passed the book, dropped on our desk today in the House.

Every one of us here today, we serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are paid by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Broadcast people down in Hansard whose writing is paid for – people work hard every day for a paycheque. At the end of that paycheque, so much in taxes has got to be sent in here to Finance. If there's anything that we should have learned from the last project, it is that we need to be open and we need to be transparent.

Put the people in front of us who did the report. How did you decide who you were going to talk to? How far was your reach? Was it St. John's? Was it over with the people who work at Emera? Was it other utilities? Was it Quebec? We don't know.

We will never know. That is very, very concerning.

The first line says creating long-term value. Well, I hope it's not creating long-term concern. We've got too much to lose, Speaker, right now. We had a deal that it was a quarter of a trillion in totality. Some people said to me, why are we even going seventeen years early? I said: Really? From 1969 to now, we've got \$2 billion; Quebec got \$28 billion. We are here with all kinds of debt, tremendous need, health care, education and transportation – tremendous need – half a million people spread over a very large landmass, in particular, the area I come from and we had an opportunity to get a \$1 billion a year, every year early. I don't know where all of that sits now.

When people in tears were before me about affordability issues and kids going off to school and all kinds of things, I said we have a plan for that. We have an answer for that. I can't tell them right now that I know where that stands. What I do tell them is we were open and transparent with the deal that we were working on. It was not finished but the deal that we were working on, we brought experts to the floor.

Did the Members on the government side ask the questions? Yes. They sat here every day and took advantage of asking the questions. So they participated in the whole process but when the time came to vote, it was a complete derelict of duty. We are here – I am representing 18 communities in my district. That is my job to do, to be their voice for them.

For me not to stand and say aye or nay for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair it would not go over very well with the people that I'm a voice for because then you're saying I have no voice. You're saying that on the biggest thing that ever hit the Legislature, you had no voice. I could name all the districts over there that walked out and the number of people in the province, they had no voice.

You had no voice, if you live out in certain districts, because they all walked out.

Speaker, I just have some notes here from things I heard in Question Period. When the Premier said we're not tearing anything up. We never had a deal. That's exactly what we were saying. We were saying the narrative that the government of the day is trying to spin to you in the election campaign is wrong.

I stood here many times in the last few weeks and said that this campaign of October '25 was run on many, many, many mistruths, many. People are beginning to see now. People are beginning to see. That 1 per cent difference in the electorate that set the outcome, they're beginning to see it was run on mistruths. It was not true.

At the end of the day, time will tell. People are already beginning to get very discouraged. Today, it's just blown up outside in the social media about why is there a report on the table? Where are these individuals who done the report? Who did they talk to? How come we can't get any answers?

Speaker, I have to watch the clock so I can get to some notes that I came in prepared with.

It is concerning that we have no knowledge – there has been zero transparency. We do not know who they talked to. We don't even know the expertise that these individuals had that they talked to. We're quite concerned about all that, Speaker.

So that's my take for now. I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to have more to say. I wasn't at the technical briefing but one of my colleagues who was there said in the 89-page report, the report said the word "may" 27 times. Doesn't sound very definitive. The report said "likely" 20 times. The report said "it's possible" 10 times. Speaker, 57 times in an 89-page report – 57 times we have may, likely, possibly.

Are they saying the report that the Liberal government have put in place may have been a good one? I haven't read the report yet. Are they saying that it's likely that the Liberal MOU would have gone to a great deal for the province and been a game changer? The money, by the way, would have already started flowing.

People are hurting today. People have needs today. I don't know how they're going to wait five years or 10 years. The money was coming in January. People are hurting today. We are hearing from people every single day that are hurting right now – right now. They're wondering how they're going to make it to next week or next month. The cost of living is at an all-time high.

I know that Members across the way get up and try and talk about how difficult all this was and it was all caused by a Liberal government. You tried to really hoodwink the people of the province with that. My mom, who lives in BC on Vancouver Island; my sister, who is in Alberta; a chunk of family who are in Ontario, Ottawa and Mississauga, right across the country the cost of living went up. It wasn't any one particular government. If you had a PC government in BC, it probably switched to an NDP. If you had a PC government in one of the Atlantic provinces, it probably switched. People were struggling. They were just looking for a change.

What I'm hearing is people are saying we're not very many months in but already we are not seeing the change that folks knocked on our door and promised, not seeing it even a shift, not even a turn in the right direction, Speaker.

I'm going to talk a little bit about Labrador. We came through the Estimates process for Labrador just a week before the House broke. We didn't get through a whole lot; we ran out of time.

It's a very important process. Everybody that participates in an Estimates process will

agree that, in transparency, you're dealing with the public purse, it doesn't matter who's on the government side. They bring in a budget and every shadow minister has the opportunity to go line by line: Why is there \$122 million extra spent here? Why is there \$82 million reduced here? It's a very important process.

I didn't come away from my Labrador Affairs Estimates with much clarity on some of the very important issues facing Labrador, so that was really frustrating for me.

I will say, when the minister was on this side of the House, she was a strong advocate. For six years, she served in Opposition and she was a strong advocate. Labradorians expect now, once in government, we will see the same bold actions and tangible results.

We were criticized so heavily for the – and I have to mention this based on some emails and video footage that was sent to me just late last night – criticized so heavily for the vulnerable population I have to mention in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Sad story. People who have been on difficult roads and have ended up where they've ended up and then you're dealing with mental health and addictions and alcoholism and drugs are rampant.

We had large stakeholder meetings where groups convened, regularly. We sought input. I'll tell you, it's pretty rough there again now. Based on what I was sent last night, it was like this is par for the course. This is just another day. I am concerned. I want the Minister of Justice to be aware of this as well because I'm concerned that nothing really serious has happened already.

So I just want to mention that. The folks there at Labrador Affairs will be able to inform the minister of some of the things that we had already done and hopefully they'll continue to build on top of that, Speaker. Just like it sounds like they're

going to take the MOU and they're not going to tear it up, they're going to use that to guide them through the next phase.

Air access, Speaker, we are so challenged right now in Labrador with one airline. We are so super challenged. The House closed here on Thursday and I left Friday. Folks who heard me stand here on Thursday and speak knew I had big plans. I had a couple of dozen roses for my aunt; Mother's Day was coming up. We actually got out on schedule, 25 minutes out we had to come back. All the lights came on in the dash and there was an issue with the flaps.

Long story short, I didn't get home for Mother's Day, but I did get to spend it with my daughter in town, so it was bittersweet and I think that may have worked out. However, I did miss the graduation that I told the hon. House I would be speaking at – tremendous challenges. That is the reason why we stepped in as a government and put a \$3.5-million pilot project. People feel completely held at hostage right now; it's challenging times.

That's why I guess the Member thought I might have misspoke or something the other day; I have a copy of that somewhere that I'm going to pull out today. In the blue book, it referenced the getting rid of what we had put in place and coming with something better. I haven't had an opportunity yet to speak to the electorate, but our \$3.5 million is gone. Right now, there's nothing. I don't know when it's coming. Maybe the Minister of Labrador Affairs could tell us when the new program is taking place because I'm hearing from people, they can't book, they can't afford to book, so there is a gap. I don't know how long that gap is going to be in place; \$3.5 million is reduced down to \$2.7 million and the government is going to spend \$300,000 to do a study.

There is nothing left to study. We've been before the transportation committee. We've been before the Standing Committee.

We've been before the one airline numerous times. My former colleague from Lake Melville, he worked so hard on this as well. There is nothing left to study.

I said to the minister in Estimates, all of those people sitting around you, they have the information in the department. We worked tirelessly on this to try and get it to a better place. In Labrador West, they are just so impacted by this. They are so far from services and when they have a sickness in the family or whether they have someone convocating at MUN, whatever it may be, and we're going to spend, this government – I could have done a whole hour on the things that they're going to plan to review now.

Health Estimates this morning, we're going to put \$1.3 million to review this; \$1.2 million to review this. It's a bit bonkers really when you think about it. Now, they're going to spend \$300,000 to do a study and they want to see – this is a publicly traded company, so you just have to check all Newfoundland and Labrador, the profits just came down again a couple of days ago.

They just landed a huge gig in Greenland. They're trying to get the gig in Australia. They've kind of bought up the entire ecosystem, so it is difficult for other airlines to get in, but we do need another airline. We need competition.

You don't need a study. The best yields you'll ever get is out of Happy Valley, the landing and takeoff fees is almost miniscule, it's nothing. The airfare has more than doubled and the plane is always full. So you know you don't need to do a study to say why is the airline charging more? Why is the airline not reliable?

I'm taking some time to talk about that because it's one of the two that I hear about the most. Folks are really, really, really unhappy across Labrador and also the Great Northern Peninsula. I am hearing from the Great Northern Peninsula.

I just spent two days with a lot of people on the Great Northern Peninsula, about 150 of them actually, and they're not happy that nan used to be able to come in here and spend some time with the grandkids or house sit – one lady said – if her kids were going south. Now she can't do it because there's actually a gap.

Was it a perfect program? No. We acknowledge concerns with the approval process. We said improvements were needed. So it's really, really frustrating that we find ourselves right now in a place where we have nothing again. Right now, we have nothing for people who want to travel – nothing. A four-year term goes fast, so how much time is going to pass?

Same thing, the medical transportation, there was a big figure that said – and it was run on heavily in the campaign – \$19 million MTAP, medical transportation, important to everybody who has got to travel to access insured services. It's \$19 million. Below that, in a little tiny figure, because the big print gives it and the small print takes it away is usually how we were told to read contracts, so be careful and read the small print. It said, new money, \$3.7 million.

Now, when I was trying to get that to square in the Estimates book before I came into Estimates, the math wasn't adding up for me there. Then the ADM explained during the Estimate period that they had savings in some areas like the MeTS, which is like the income support piece. So they moved savings. It wasn't \$19 million, the big figure. It wasn't the \$3.7 million in new money. It was even less than that.

I guess we're going through, we're going to wait until we pass the budget, I don't know. This administration formed government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to hear the hon. Member.

L. DEMPSTER: – on the 14th of October and it seems like it might be one full year before we actually see the results of some of this materialize.

I hear a lot still about MTAP – not a day goes by that I don't hear about MTAP. One of the things that is really, really frustrating is when we're seeing an increased number – and I will ask when I meet with NLHS in the coming days – we have an increased number of people that are traveling all the way from Labrador into the city – all the way. If you're driving it's 1,200, 1,400, 1,500 kilometres, if you're flying it's \$1,200, \$1,400, \$1,500; it's not cheap either way. They're flying in for appointments only to find out their appointment was cancelled.

I just dealt with an elderly person in Red Bay. I heard from someone in Goose Bay. So we've got to do better. I don't know if the new CorCare system with all of its technological advancement is going to be able to help us, but we can't have people coming from Labrador, all the way to the city, for hospital appointments, only to find out they were cancelled.

Guess what happened? I said to the elderly lady, you submit your claim to MTAP, they have to reimburse you. In her wisdom, this little old lady said, but they're only going to give me half and I never even got an appointment, so I should be getting it all back. I said you absolutely should.

I don't think we have a definitive answer on that yet. I'm not aware, anyway, but very frustrating for seniors who travel all the way. You're coming on your one airline and you're getting at the baggage belt 2:30 in the morning like we were the other day. I got to bed at 3:20 a.m. and I know there were seniors in wheelchairs on that flight who actually had to be at the Health Sciences for 8 a.m. So all of that is very concerning, Speaker.

In Estimates, I didn't get an opportunity – we ran out of time – to ask questions

around the long-term care, the additional long-term care and transitional beds for Happy Valley-Goose Bay or the proposed studies for long-term care capacity in Lab West. Again, the issue is not about whether those studies are important, as I talked about earlier, the issue is that the Labradorians, the ones I'm talking to and the ones I'm hearing from, are tired of the studies replacing action.

This is the same people who got up every day, some of them were a decade in Opposition here – a decade. I understand now why they get angry and things like that in Question Period, because they're still in the Opposition mode. They would say: The time for words has passed; we want action.

We do want action. The people that I'm hearing from are saying you ran on a whole list of things you were going to do – I have it here before me – and we want action, but we're getting study after study. I haven't totalled – actually, I should go through and add up how much money is being spent in this budget in the different departments to study things that we already know the answer for. It is quite a long list.

This is something the minister was passionate about when she was in Opposition. She talked about, we need action, not words, but now she's on the other side and she had to say, yeah, we're going to do a study on air access. Yeah, we're going to do a study on long-term care beds. Yeah, we're going to do a study on transitional beds. The list is long, Speaker.

Seniors' housing: we briefly discussed seniors' housing in Labrador West. That investment is certainly welcome and badly needed. I'm quite familiar with that file.

I did have concerns, and I raised those, that currently the funding is contingent on the federal application. I am concerned about that – and I know the minister is listening intently. But the minister that I was in

Estimates with said she is confident that the application will come through.

I do sincerely hope that. I hope she's right but my questions was: If the federal application isn't approved – and we dealt a lot with the federal government when were on the other side, lots of cost-shared, big road projects and things like that – is the commitment still there and the province will go it alone? I'm not sure. I didn't get an answer to that. We hope that's what will happen.

We do still have, as I talked about at the beginning, Speaker, serious questions around energy capacity and infrastructure in our region. One of things that we hear, in particular, in Lab West and out on the South Coast, one of the things that I always leant my voice to as we were working through the MOU and the different definitive agreements, is that we should not be having conversation about super diesel from the NL Hydro CEO who has now gone from that old panel to this one. When we're going to have mega, mega money on the floor to discuss the totality of the project, a quarter of a trillion dollars, we should not be talking diesel and super diesel in our coastal communities.

In places like, I believe it's – I'm not going to pronounce it right – up in Winnipeg, they're building a big line up north and there are all kinds of very modern things that are happening to provide communities in the north with electricity.

As a matter of fact, there's a business man in Labrador who certainly sold me – and I spoke on it many times – that when it comes to the North Coast of Labrador, we should be building an energy corridor. When we build the road to the North, the transmission line would go, it will take care of the transportation, it will take care of their communication and you'll have access to enough resources that would probably pay for the whole huge project itself – an energy

corridor to the North Coast of Labrador, what a brilliant idea.

I was on a panel with this individual at Expo a couple of years ago. He said, I have a lot to lose, given the business world that I'm in and the services I provide, he told that room of 300 people that day. But he said, I really believe in an energy corridor to the North Coast and certainly it's something that I was pushing for, for the South Coast, was a transmission line.

Why are we going to build a super diesel plant? By the way, we're on mobile units. In the community of the only shrimp processing facility in all of Labrador, we're on mobile units. It would be unheard of anywhere else. A decision came down in October and we're still waiting for some movement. Hydro has an idea that they want to go with a super diesel plant and the PUB is saying it's not on. We are totally in a bottleneck – totally. I've really been asking the minister to intervene. I want the minister, whatever we need to do, to get some movement on that.

Don't wait until there's a very serious fire, when it's minus 40 in February and a volunteer fire department with very limited resources got to go out. Don't wait until homes are lost and people's lives are lost. I have seniors that tell me now that they can't sleep at night, in particular, in the cold winter months when we lose the power because we're on these little mobile units. They serve two fish processing facilities, the shrimp processing facility in Charlottetown and the whelk processing facility in Pinsent's Arm.

On housing, I do want to say as well, Speaker, before I move to my next topic, that we can announce all the housing we want, but if Labrador does not have the power capacity to support growth, we're going to continue to come up against the same barriers.

I want to talk about electrification and mining. These energy concerns aren't just related to housing. There are industrial projects on the horizon for Labrador that are contingent on the region getting more capacity for power. The minister assured us that electrification in Labrador is a priority and the Minister of Energy and Mines has said that as well. But the facts are, as of today, there are no solutions. I don't know how far out into the future the solutions are, but the challenges are today and there's nothing on the radar, as of yet, with solutions.

People are asking, do we have a timeline? No, don't have anything. Don't even know how long the next stage of this is going to take. Don't know anything about timelines or deadlines. This problem is now, Speaker, and any solution will take time. Electrifying a region doesn't happen overnight. These companies aren't going to stick around. Somebody said that to me recently and it stuck with me and I wrote it down. These companies aren't going to stick around on empty promises.

It's hard when you're doing work in the North, when you're far from services, when you've got to bring up your workers. We're going through that right now in a number of my communities, and they have opportunity to go elsewhere. We know we have the mineral. We know we're rich in resources. But when your growth is stunted and you don't have the electricity, the problem is now and any solution will take time. Electrifying a region does not happen overnight. These companies are not going to stick around, Speaker.

I'll say it a second time. The region and the potential investors – I was down after the mineral review, I was at a reception last fall, I think it might have been December, down at the Convention Centre. Some of the people that we floated around the room and chatted with, like potential investors, they said we need concrete action now. At least

we need to know something is on the horizon.

Speaker, roads and infrastructure, if these projects move forward Labrador infrastructure will need to be addressed. There's no doubt about that. When I started as the MHA for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, it's less than 13 years ago, but we made tremendous, tremendous investment into Labrador as a whole, into areas that were severely lacking, severely.

I could never understand why we had 700 or 800 kilometres from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Red Bay and the only part that got paved was guess what? The 80k to the Muskrat Falls Project; never about the people.

If you live in Labrador, you understand if you live there, why they get so frustrated when the headline in the news every day is about Churchill or it's about Voisey's or the *Umiak* coming out of Voisey's, that boat and the ice she can go through and the people in the Labrador Straits are often stranded because they can't get through the ice.

People who live in Labrador, whether it's the North Coast, the South Coast, they have challenges moving with transportation, they have challenge with affordability, with the cost of food.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'd ask Members to keep the noise down a little, I'm trying to hear the hon. Member.

L. DEMPSTER: You can imagine how frustrating it is for the people who call – the best people you'll find in the world, the people who call Labrador home and yet they feel: we never get our fair share. When it comes to taking things out, everything is put in place, everything, and we have many examples of that.

I used to talk about that when I was a younger me and a more fiery me. I can see Clyde Jackman and some of the folks on the other side that would pay attention. I was so frustrated, every spring and every fall when the House was sitting. I would leave my door and my husband would say, stick to the high points on the road. It was just atrocious. It was worst than any wood path that forestry now closes down in the spring.

Over time, bit by bit by bit, we got that road done, from 80 kilometres out of Goose, we started there and all the way to Red Bay. We redid in the Labrador Straits and the time has come to get the branch roads pave. The time has come.

I know I said it before, the man who is now the Premier today, he was on a little bit of a mission when he was the CEO of Lab-Grenfell to consolidate the clinics into one in Southeastern Labrador. The Hay report had come down, I was pretty new as a trustee on the board, and that's when I stood up and said, for the people and on behalf of the people, we will not have people drive 50 kilometres over a gravel road with a nurse holding an IV bag and some young man who has a bone sticking out through his ankle from a basketball accident on a dirt road. We will not have it.

If you want to pave our branch roads and give us that asphalt, come back and talk about how we can provide a better health care service, maybe, with one location that is in the centre of the five. But do not come and look to have the conversation if we are still on a dirt road that is nothing but muck and pug. I just went through it again this spring.

I was angry every time I came home and left. Sometimes, perhaps, when I stay in here for a weekend, the folks at home get a little break from me, because I was angry that the headline every day was the resources in Labrador, yet we're still driving on a dirt road. Not because we didn't do

anything, this Liberal government did more for Labrador in the past 10 years than I've seen in the entire years before, I'll say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: We made tremendous progress. We were just coming off 12 years of a PC government and it was desperate. Every which way, it was desperate. We had our work cut out, but I'm so pleased to say I had the support of my colleagues when it came to communities needing a community centre.

Fire trucks in the district – we had nothing to even defend ourselves, and we know how climate change is changing. You can start at L'Anse au Clair and go all the way down. I'm incredibly proud of the work that we have done during our 10 years in government for the areas that were seriously lacking in Labrador, Speaker, but we have more to do. Some of the projects were not finished. I'm going to continue to be that voice for my people.

One of the big disappointments this year is, in budget '25, we had \$3 million approved, gone through, to start to the upgrade for the 29 kilometres on the Charlottetown branch road. Engineering had begun – cancelled, gone.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

L. DEMPSTER: Gone.

Like, I can appreciate a new government coming in to say we're going to put our stamp now, but not to even have a transition year?

They cancelled the bigger projects, the hospital in St. Clare's – which, by the way, that's all the talk when you go there. I talked about it this morning a little bit. A couple of Fridays ago when I was there, I was in the elevator and I was jammed in and there was a couple from a little bit outside of town and he looked at me and he recognized me and

he said oh, it's you. We don't need a new hospital do we, my dear? His wife was giving him a dig.

So you're going to come with your new priorities, but to cancel something that was already in the works, that was already announced, I can tell you the people in Labrador aren't too happy. They aren't too happy. They said this is not what we voted for, to go back in time, to go backwards.

Well, maybe they didn't want to build a hospital and it's a big-ticket item and they didn't want to do that in phases, but to take your little bit of gravel road, not deserving of that? No. Not deserving of reliable power anymore – you're going to stick on mobile units. That's there since October. Gravel road – what else are they going to cut? So I'm hearing from people on a regular basis about that, that are not very happy.

Speaker, we talk about recruitment and retention a lot. You know, even if it's teachers – and I was pleased to be a part of a government that put a lot of bonuses and incentives in place. Whether it's in health care, for nurses, students going into the medical field, physicians, there's a list – and the government of the day will have to agree that we put a huge list; \$10 million we put into recruitment and retention – \$10 million.

Now they promised the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we're going to do better than that. We still got (inaudible). Guess what they put in? It was \$3.5 million. So how do you think the \$3.5 million in recruitment and retention is going to do better than the \$10 million? I don't know how that's going to yield something better.

But when I talk about infrastructure, when I talk about a dirt road, if you're trying to entice teachers who are going to go out on long weekends and some probably leave their families and things, when I talk about nurses, you have to have the infrastructure

in place. That's a part of recruitment and retention.

One lady was pushing – what do you call it – a stretcher, when I was at St. Clare's, actually. She said, they wonder why no one wants to come here and go to work. She was pushing this stretcher, because everything was so dilapidated down there and things. That is part of your recruitment and retention. When you are dealing with a national shortage, when you are competing with other provinces and territories, you have to make it enticing for those people to come here, Speaker.

I'm just going to move quickly to some of the things I was looking at last night in the blue book around health care, if I can find it. Better health care – there's nothing more important than health care. I actually have constituents that are at my place here in town right now, really going through a lot, and all the services you need on the coast are not readily available.

You can probably get your CAT scan in Corner Brook, not too far to travel, but then you need results from your CAT scan and things like that. So I have folks that are staying with me this week on a heavy journey. I tell you, your life can change on a dime – can change on a dime. I have a family member right now, an immediate family member who is palliative, and it's very difficult when you live on the coast and there's a certain type of blood work and you have to go all the way to Goose Bay, 420 kilometres in and 420 kilometres back. A lot of people are really, really struggling.

One of the things when I was reading through this last night on better health care, "the people of our province deserve real access to healthcare – not just a place on a waiting list," I thought, I have to speak about it for a moment today. The people that are reaching out to me about the long wait times in emerge, and I wish that they had begun moving in a better direction by now.

I had a young lady, a teacher, actually, here in town – she's from my district – who got bitten by a dog on a walking trail. The first time she went to St. Clare's emerge, she was there for 12 hours, and she got fed up and left. Her mom said you have to go back. You have an infection in your leg from what happened with the dog. She went back and she waited 19 hours.

Well, last night, I had a lady reach out and send me a note on my MHA page, and I think she lives somewhere on the fringes, Mount Pearl, St. John's, somewhere out in that area. She said 19 hours, try going into emerge Monday morning and getting seen Tuesday evening. Now, I never heard of that long.

I mean, I just hope for the sake of the people who have to go to emerge that we're soon going to start tipping and going a little better because that is not what we've seen so far. It is continuing to get worse and worse and worse. Certainly, what I've seen in Forteau, so many challenges. I'm afraid we're going to lose some of the best nurses that you'll ever find because they are so run ragged and there is so much that's placed on them. Some might say it's only been October, but it's seven or eight months now and you should not be still seeing a slippage of 19 and 20 hours of wait times in emerg.

One of the things that was in the blue book, by the Premier of today: "People shouldn't be forced to go to the emergency room or resort to virtual care as their only point of access to healthcare." Well, that's all we got right now in Forteau is virtual care. It's really concerning if there's an accident, if there's something serious, like I talked about a couple of weeks ago with a cancer patient and what that person needed done was not available to be done.

The Teladoc doctor was at a loss after he said try this. Sorry, we don't have a CPC working here since March. Okay, well give me a scan. We don't have that. Give me an X-ray. We don't have that. So it's pretty

difficult for a doctor who's sitting in Ontario to do their job.

Speaker, the national pharmacare program, we talked about it a little bit in Estimates this morning. I know it's near and dear to the Third Party's heart as well. I continue to have people reach out to me on that. I don't think that we can throw up our hands and say the ship has sailed, she's out of the harbour, the door is locked. I think it's something that we're really going to have to continue to make noise on.

We know there are a number of provinces that have signed on. It seems like the federal government haven't moved since that time. We had to pause it for the election, but just to write a letter is not enough. Just to go up and have one meeting is not enough. The pharmacare is so, so important for people who are struggling right now.

When I said in an interview a while ago that it was a win, win, win. It's a win for the person who's able to have the drugs that they need. It's a win for the fiscal purse. These people who are not taking their drugs are probably in places like I live, getting medevaced out and that's costing the taxpayers' purse a lot of money. It's a win for the economy because you're going to have these drugs covered and people are going to be provided with them. So I really want to put on the record here that pharmacare, we've all got to collectively keep pushing so that can happen.

One of the things in the blue book that it talked about was rural health care eroded under a Liberal government. Well, I can tell you the erosion hasn't stopped. It has gone very, very downward. I hope it turns around because those people are also, not just my constituents, they're my family, they're my friends, all over Newfoundland and Labrador, I have family connections and friend connections. We want better health care. There's nothing more important in this

province. I'm just wondering how long people are going to have to wait.

Another frustration is with no management on the ground. I did raise it this morning with the minister that I don't agree with having nobody in an executive position on the ground in Labrador and I know many people who don't, many people, if you don't have someone at the decision-making.

I remember when Dwight Ball was the premier, I can't remember the details but the deputy minister in Labrador got moved or brought in here or something. Well, that became so noisy, when I was new, that there would be no deputy minister on the ground in Labrador. There's a reason we don't have an office on the Bonavista or the Burin Peninsula. There's a reason we don't have an office there, but we have an office of Labrador Affairs. It's because we have many challenges that are unique, that are different to any other part of the province. That's why they wanted the permanent head. So Dwight said he couldn't leave this position without seeing that was filled.

I am hearing from people saying: Are they putting in a COO? We know there's only one CEO. Are they putting a COO in Labrador? I want to pass that along as well because it's something that I'm hearing about, actually, increasingly, especially when it became known that the CEO now, the acting CEO of NLHS had been in Labrador, I think a number of times, and even community advisory committees were not aware. That's a concern because we have to continue with important communication.

We know that in the blue book the Premier said: We know that better care starts with supporting health care workers. Staff are telling me that the shortages are getting worse. So, again, someone will say, well, it hasn't been long, but we're not even seeing a shift. We're not even seeing a change in the right direction.

The MRIs that were announced, the two in the budget, they seem about as far out as any details or results or financial gain from the MOU. They seem about that far out because we heard this morning from staff that the first thing that's got to happen is renovations. First, we've got to have renovations to prepare for the equipment. I understand all that. I get all that.

Then we have to find radiologists. I know when I worked as a current employment counsellor, somebody said we're going to try and talk to the college and have more than 15 seats. I can tell you that we tried that, even before coming into the position I'm in right now. What we were told was there are only 15 students in that course because a part of the training, they have to be out working in hospitals and on sites, and they couldn't accommodate any more than 15. So if we've got only 12 that's coming out this year, 10 that's already got jobs, two more to go, we've got to do the renovations, we've got to find the staff.

People say to me when I'm on the road, my, that's some good news. That's some good. I say, yes, anytime we can get an advancement, that's good news. It won't be this year, I don't see it being next year, perhaps it might be in the third year. So that's why we've got to continue to make sure the medical transportation program is working as it should because there's really no relief in sight on the radar at this time, Speaker.

I actually wrote this very late last night. I wrote WRONG in capital letters. I'm saying that what the Premier of the day put in the blue book was wrong. That's what I'm saying. It really, really, really angered me because it was talking about mental health and addictions. I think mental health and addictions affects everyone in this House in some form, your family, your friends. We probably all got sad stories. We all want to help people to get to a place where their mental health is better because your physical health means nothing, if you're

sitting in a chair and your mental health is so bad, your physical health means nothing.

So in the book, it said: In the province, everyone should have timely access to mental health and addiction services. Get this, guys: “While the Liberals built a new mental health facility, they reduced the number of beds, leaving it too small to meet demand. People in our communities are waiting years to see a mental health professional. After years of under-prioritizing mental healthcare, the system in this province needs to be fixed” I took exception to the Premier of the day saying after years of underprioritizing mental health care.

Several premiers ago, I was driving on a dusty road to Mary’s Harbour to a NunatuKavut event and Dwight, we kind of knew was about to be premier, I just said off the cuff: What’s your number one priority as you become the next premier? He said to improve access to mental health. He was a man that also had family connections with people that struggled. He wanted to make it better.

When I drive that parkway now and I see that beautiful facility – I’ve seen some coverage lately of people who say it feels good, just to walk in there, the brightness and the services. But to say with that kind of investment that we underprioritized mental health is another mistruth. Page after page of things written here that are wrong, that’s not true. It’s unbelievable that there’s no accountability for something like that.

We expanded mobile mental health crisis teams. We reduced wait times. We put a big focus in this because we know that there is no health without mental health – no health without mental health. We do encourage people to look after their mental health. Actually, the PMR that we’re going to be debating tomorrow in the House about limiting access to certain sites for 16 and under is so important because never before

has mental health been such a challenge among our young people.

Young people have a special place in my heart. Whether it’s the Rangers, whether it’s at the youth centre, and some of them are struggling and they’ve grown up in an age – we like to say often, oh, you got it so much easier than we had it. I don’t think the young people today got it easier. I don’t think. We never grew up with this. We never grew up being validated by how many likes you get on a post or how many shares. We never grew up with someone behind a keyboard being able to bully you and put you down.

Just recently, we saw a man from this province whose daughter died by suicide – incredibly sad, lives forever changed, all coming down to these devices. It’s good and it’s bad. We, serving the public, know the ugly side of social media. I like to use it as a tool to push information out and you have a few followers, but I would never stoop to the level of low that some of the people that I know have, Speaker.

An hour goes quite fast. I used to say to my colleague, Jim Bennett, 20 minutes goes fast when you’re up. He’d say no, 20 minutes goes fast when you’re wound up. You’re always wound up. Well, I wasn’t too wound up today, but I did get a few thoughts out there, speaking to the amendment, and I want to thank you very much for your time. I’ll have more to say the next time I’m on my feet.

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.

It is my honour to stand and speak on behalf of the constituents of St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi here today on the budget amendment.

First of all, I want to also convey my sincere condolences on the passing of John Hutton – a musical icon, a legend in the entertainment, and my condolences.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. O'LEARY: John Hutton was very well known in our entertainment district, which, of course, is embedded in St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, in the beautiful downtown core of the City of St. John's. I know he's left an incredible legacy. A great loss to the community and my love and condolences go out to Caron and his bandmates and everybody in the community. I just want to begin with that.

The NDP, our main focus, always, is about equity but affordability, making sure that everybody gets raised up. This is one of the key things that we want to continue to look at, at the NDP.

Do you know what? The budget – *Opportunity for All of Us* – I think it's really, in many ways, a bit of a missed opportunity for many of us. The affordability crisis was really largely ignored.

All the calls that we get, the emails, the phone calls, many of them from seniors who are really super struggling in these times. Many of the things that we are seeing in the budget that was tabled, they just missed the point. They don't address it in the form that we see. It feels like a missed opportunity.

Of course, on this day when the report of the Churchill River Independent Review Committee has finally been tabled, many of the public, many people in this House of Assembly are still trying to figure it all out – many new Members to this House. The reality is how is it going to impact people and their ability to have a sustainable lifestyle. That's what we need to continue to look at.

Is this a missed boat? Is this a missed opportunity, or is there something coming in

on its heels? Because people are in desperate need. We hear it all the time. I know that I couldn't possibly be the only Member in this House of Assembly who gets calls from their constituents about the need, the affordability crisis that people are feeling. We need answers. We need solutions. I would like to talk about some of the intersections that happen in regard to this need, this drive for a better sustainable, affordable living in our province.

One of the things that is really interesting – and as the NDP critic for Justice and Public Safety, there has been a number of asks to the government about how we can make people safer. I think it's a really important discussion to have about how affordability and public safety intersect and how the criminal system, the justice system, all intersects because people aren't born criminals. People are born into scenarios where they're disadvantaged, where they're poverty-stricken, where they're dealing with trauma from broken homes or families where people don't have the wherewithal to be able to provide a safe lifestyle and upbringing for a lot of children and families.

So what happens to those people? In the education system and beyond, we need to ensure that we are not creating systems where we have children who are vulnerable going into school systems and then, next thing you know, they're into the criminal system.

There's a better way, and I really believe that one of the tools that we can use is restorative justice models. We know that restorative justice models, they come in all kinds of sizes and shapes. It's one way for us to look at how we can not only prevent people from going into the criminal system, but also how we can help people who have been incarcerated rehabilitate and become active, contributing members of society and get back out.

Let's bring that back to affordability. When we're talking about affordability, look at the

cost incarceration is to our society. Look at the cost that it is to families in our community. This incarceration cycle that we have found ourselves in where we just put people into prisons and then expect them to be fine when they're finally done their term and enter into society, they haven't had an opportunity to turn their lives around. I think that we can think about how the justice system and affordability are really intrinsically interconnected.

One of the things in the budget, of course, we're talking about food insecurity, how it's alarming and under addressed, the growing reliance on food banks, how it's normalized rather than urgently reduced. We have no pathway to liveable wages, and housing, there's a major missed opportunity for the housing crisis that we find ourselves in right now, this budget has not provided. Housing treated as market commodity and not as a human right.

When we think about the justice system and how people, when they find themselves in poverty, unable to afford things, lacking the ability that many others had the privilege of having, the Justice and Public Safety system, it's a surface-level approach. It is get rid of them. Let's move people out into a space where they're taken care of and people feel safe.

But let's remember some of these people – actually, most of these people, all of us have people in our lives who have had a brush against the justice system, the mental health and addictions. They've been exposed to mental health issues or addictions issues. We all know people in our families, in our communities, who have had this brush, and it is upon us to try to give them the best opportunity so that they can move forward in their lives. There's no meaningful investment, Speaker, in mental health, addictions or prevention. The focus in the justice system is a focus on policing.

The RNC and the RCMP increases, no denying, we need more of those members

out there in the community. Certainly, as I've mentioned to the chief of police himself, from my former time as a municipal leader, we've been calling on foot patrols. Get the police officers out in the community so they can know their neighbours, so that they can know the community members, so they can interact and be trusted in community and have a positive influence in that regard. It's a far more effective way.

We know that police officers have to use vehicles and things like that, but having the opportunity to have people actually physically engage on a one-to-one level in a safe scenario has great benefits. All of these things are about how we connect people in our community so we can start to feel safer.

Again, the NDP, we have been calling regularly regarding GPS ankle monitoring for intimate partner violence cases. This has been an ongoing ask for something that we know works, that we know can prevent further violence to intimate partners, domestic violence scenarios, because we've seen it in operation in other provinces. It can prevent deaths, not only more violence, but it can prevent deaths from happening. That is another preventative measure that we can do to provide safer communities. Safer communities begin right in the home. That is where it happens.

So the question for me is about the absence of restorative justice models. I'll swing it back around to that idea, because that restorative justice model, and there are many shapes and sizes as I've mentioned, is truly rooted in Indigenous communities, but we see it in so many different ways. It's a way to stop the school- to- prison pipeline because that doesn't get addressed when we are punitive only. We have to start early. We need, as the Minister of Education certainly would, I'm sure, agree with, we need to ensure that our children are educated about kindness, compassion and a number of different aspects like that very

early on because these are behavioural things that will follow you for the rest of your life.

While we're talking about this affordability, public safety, justice system, I think it was a great opportunity during constituency week, myself and my colleagues in the NDP caucus, we hosted a panel, a restorative justice panel, which outlined compassion and a community approach to justice. It was a phenomenal experience, great room of people. It was live streamed and people came together because they are really concerned, not only about their own public safety but about their communities and what actually can happen, how we can make better systems.

Restorative justice offers a series of principles, values, beliefs and processes that can increase the likelihood that people will reconnect and be health members of a community. Now, that was the quote from Jessica Webb, who represented on the panel from Relationships First again embedded in education. Their main focus is about education and the power of education for creating and supporting a restorative justice model for students.

On May 13, we held a forum, a panel. We set it up, but we wanted to let the experts take it and go from there. So the panel was moderated by a former Crown prosecutor, Mike Murray, somebody who has been very vocal in community and certainly has a lot of knowledge about the judicial system. It also featured Jessica Webb, as I just mentioned from Relationships First Newfoundland and Labrador. She works in very tight concert with Dorothy Vaandering who does incredible work in the education system and Dan McGettigan of Turnings. Now, Dan and Kevin Foley, they've been doing incredible work in community with folks who've been incarcerated for many, many years, helping people rehabilitate.

Melissa Noseworthy from the John Howard Society. We had Marc Roberts Benoit

Humber from First Light, again, because Indigenous communities is where restorative justice models really have taken their footing from and Riley Moss from Roots of Resilience. Now, Riley Moss is a local independent lawyer, but is tied to Roots of Resilience, which certainly helps with mothers with substance use and, again, we can see the full circle of how this enters into the justice system.

So the conversation focused on educating the public on what exactly restorative justice is and gave examples of how it can be done in our communities. I have to say it was absolutely amazing to hear the passion of these panelists and the work that they do in community. They truly want safer communities while ensuring compassion remains at the centre by meeting people where they are and giving them the support they need to successfully reintegrate into society. We can't just expect to try to put people away and when they finally do their time and come back that everything is going to be okay. There needs to be rehabilitation and restorative justice is a very strong model that supports this.

We hear a lot of messaging around: lock him up, or jail, not bail. While those reactions are understandable, because we are concerned about our public safety and our family's public safety, but we need to challenge that narrative because, as we discussed, these approaches clearly are not working. We're seeing overloaded prisons. We're seeing more and more incarcerations. We're seeing the affordability of housing people in prisons in cots with rodents and water dripping into a gymnasium. It's inhumane and that is not a way that our society should be moving.

So restorative justice can be as simple as an offender writing an apology letter to those that they've harmed, but it can also be taking an important step to understanding why they caused that harm and how they can change to ensure it doesn't happen again. When you truly listen to people and

meet them where they are, that's when healing can happen. When the focus is only on the punishment, we miss the critical opportunity to help people work through their issues so they can heal, grow and have a real chance to thrive.

I know that some people will say, oh, that sounds all kumbaya; isn't that all wonderful? The reality is that kindness and compassion is the answer. It is the answer to how we continue to grow a healthy, sustainable society. In a healthy, sustainable society, our costs are also going to be reflected.

With many of the educators that we had in the room at the panel, it was really amazing to see the cross-section that we had there. We had people who were involved in the judicial system. We had lawyers, Crown prosecutors, social workers, a lot of agencies that support people who are having trouble in the legal system. But the room was full of educators, which showed an incredible opportunity, in my mind, because this is where it really needs to start. It is about giving people an opportunity to change, which is something that I believe that our society is truly struggling with.

This restorative justice panel was a great opportunity to, kind of, begin that conversation. It's only the start around restorative justice, about how we cannot keep believing that simply hiring more police will make our communities safer. As I mentioned before to our Minister of Finance, we have a big pie, we have many pieces and there are many ways to approach it. But if we don't want to keep doing the same things over and over and over again, we want to make positive change happen, we need to look at different models.

I certainly hope that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety is really taking into account the cost – the cost to families when we are dealing with just pure punitive incarceration kind of models of justice. Because we need to build a better society. We need to reassure those who have

experienced harm that everybody is human and that when we lead with compassion and community at the centre, that's where the real safety and trust is built.

I would like to take the opportunity now just to read out an email of a gentleman who sent me a note. He was really sad that he couldn't go to the restorative justice panel but he sent me a note and I'd like to read it out because I think it's very powerful and, kind of, exemplifies the spirit of what we're trying to discuss.

He said: Wish I were in town to attend your session on restorative justice. From a personal experience perspective, I can honestly say our province is not there. I'd like to relay an experience I had while working as a chaplain at Her Majesty's Penitentiary.

I spoke with a young man who was in for armed robbery. He was convicted of holding up a gas bar with a knife. I asked if he ever thought about how the young lady attendant may have felt as a result of his actions, and he said he had never thought about that.

We spoke for some time and he said there was nothing he could do about that now. I challenged him on that and suggested he could write the lady a letter of apology. He said he didn't know her name, and I said don't worry about that, I'll see what I can do to get the letter to her.

So the next day he asked to see me and showed me the letter he had written. He apologized to the victim, said he would never have hurt her and means her no harm. He said he was sorry for what he had done, wished her well and asked for her forgiveness. I complimented him on him writing the letter and said I would pass it along to the powers that be.

I met with the superintendent and explained the origins of the letter. He thanked me and said he would give it to Victim Services. A few days later, I was called to the

administrative offices and questioned about the letter. I was then told that there is nothing in place to deal with such things and I was ordered to cease and desist from ever doing it again.

What are we doing? What kind of society are we building when we're shutting people down in that kind of manner?

On another occasion, I was called in one night to advise an inmate that his son had committed suicide. The inmate was, to say the least, distraught. I spoke with him at length and about 1 in the morning, I went to the captain's office to clock out. It was then that I saw the father lying spread eagle on the floor of a solitary confinement cell.

I said to the captain, that doesn't seem right. He just found out his son was dead and you have him in solitary. Wouldn't it be much better if he could be with some of his fellow inmates? The response was sorry, that's our policy.

Build all the new prisons that you want, but if it's just for punitive purposes, we'll just be another \$300 million in debt and no further ahead as a society.

So I read that because this is powerful, this is experiential and this is the direct link between justice and public safety and affordability. We don't even have to even talk about the humanity aspect of it, but that's a cost. It's a cost to us all in a society.

I'm learning – I'm learning a lot. This has been an incredible privilege for me to have the public trust, to be a Member of the House of Assembly for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and to work with my colleague, and to work with all of the hon. Members of this House. Because despite our differences, despite the many opinions that we all have, we are here to do good work. We have to keep that at the core.

I think that we could probably make use of some restorative justice right here in the

House of Assembly on a more regular basis as well. I think it would serve us all much better and, working collaboratively, we'll see a lot more positive things happen for the people of our province.

Justice and Public and Safety – the approach to crime prioritizes increased policing while overall neglecting the root causes of mental health, addiction and poverty. Domestic violence and femicide, key drivers of harm in communities, they're not meaningfully addressed in this budget. There is no mention of preventative tools, as I mentioned, like the GPS monitoring. We know that that's working in other areas. It can save lives; it can make people safe.

Despite the many calls that we have had to government by community organizations to implement it as well, a continued kick-it-down-the-road response, despite a multitude of the provinces that have been successful and have implemented it.

Restorative justice models are being instated. While we see the increasing numbers of RNC and RCMP officers – and I have many friends who are RCMP officers and RNC officers who are doing great work in in community, but that is only one side of the justice system and this public safety aspect.

As I mentioned before, and we've heard it many times and we heard it at the panel, we want to prevent the pipeline of schools to prisons fostered for our young children. People aren't born criminals. People are not born that way. They're born in a system where they have mental health, addictions, trauma, poverty; where they just don't have an equitable chance at life. So how are they going to move forward?

Well, oftentimes, people find themselves in a life a crime. That's where they turn because they have no other options, so we have to disrupt. We have to be disruptors. We have to stop that cycle. We're not going to do it by just putting a cap on the back end

and thinking that somehow that's going to help us in our society.

I also had some great response, Speaker, from a gentleman who deals a lot with meditation practice in our community and about how it has prevented many, many people from suicides. Now, suicide is one of the most difficult things to talk about. When you have a family member who died by suicide, there's so much stigma and shame around it. There is a long history of treating suicide like it's a crime, it's a criminal intent, when ultimately, when somebody dies by suicide, they're desperate. They've reached the end of the line and they have no other alternative, no other choice.

There are, again, other restorative justice models, but also meditation that has helped many people. We all know there are many people of faith in this House who believe in a maker, who gives them solace in their spirit, and many people who also find that same kind of solace in a meditation format. All of these things, again, are things that contribute to the pie.

I think we need to continue to have these conversations because even though it doesn't maybe sound like it's directly involved with the budget that we're talking about, we're all crunching numbers here, but the reality is it is because it's a huge cost to our society. It's a huge cost and it will cost us: the incarceration, the further patrols, the further expenses that go into stopping crime on the back end. When we really need to be looking at education in the schools and how that is going to impact people learning to become kind, compassionate individuals.

We're not perfect. Everybody is human. We know that we're all going to make mistakes at one point or another. By the grace of God, we're here and functioning humans, but anybody is one step away from a tragedy, a death, a sickness, a mental illness. There are all kinds of things that can happen in our society, but with the proper

supports at the start, with making sure that we provide wraparound supports for people and the proper education, we can build a safer society. I really, truly believe that.

This community discussion that we had on accountability and healing and discussing how offenders can get the support they need to grow from their past and get back on their feet, around conflict resolution – we know conflict resolution in this House of Assembly. We know it's important because we live in a democratic society where we have to come to some sort of resolution if we want to serve the people that we are representing.

Addressing those living in poverty, in violent homes, unsafe spaces, this is what's going to support our young people. We have to address these issues and that is about wraparound supports, making sure that people are housed, making sure that people have safe housing is number one. But the fact that they can't go to the grocery store and can't afford healthy, safe food – those are still the people who not only are they going to fall into unhealthy lifestyles, because the only food that they can afford is an unhealthy diet and then we're backing it on to the health system, then all the cost goes into that.

Why don't we start at the beginning and make sure that everybody has access to housing, to affordable food, good food, healthy food, green vegetables? Living in Newfoundland and Labrador, my mother's family were farmers. They came from the West Coast. She came from a family of 14. They were farmers and they had all the beautiful food. They had fish. They had cattle. They had beautiful, fresh cream and all that. It was all healthy. But we don't have that kind of society anymore. We have smaller families and we buy our groceries and God knows where it was raised or where it came from – and, hopefully, it's not from the United States of the America because we should still be keeping an eye on where we're buying our groceries from

when we're in the supermarkets. That's something that we don't hear any conversation about, is how we need to continue to support local.

All of these things at the beginning can be a true method of ensuring that people are healthy, that they're provided for. When people are healthy and supported, they're not going to fall into these kind of traps where they're forced to go and enter into a life of crime, start robbing things because they're desperate or whatever. These are all cyclical things, they're all interrelated and I think that we, as thinking people, the representatives of the people, really need to think hard about it.

I also want to really take the opportunity here to give a huge shout-out to the panellists that came. Nobody said no. Everybody said, yes, right there, as soon as they got the phone call and the ask – come on, would you be interested in sitting on this panel?

They're so passionate about the work that they're doing and the successes that they're having in this non-profit sector, primarily – people who have deep lived experience. I mean, when I think about Turnings and the work that Turnings has done in community for decades –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): Order, please!

S. O'LEARY: Dan McGettigan, Kevin Foley, with very little resource, have been supporting people and trying to get incarcerated individuals on their feet for a very long time. They have lived experience, working in the system and now, on the other side of the system, trying to ensure that people can have a crack at rebuilding their lives, which is what we should be doing. We should be supporting them.

I want to give a shout-out to these organizations: First Light; Turnings; the

John Howard Society have been doing fantastic work, and we continue to learn. The John Howard Society is actually province wide. I'm living in St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District and I know the John Howard Society and the good work it does, but I had no idea of the extent that it has and the work that they do all throughout the province.

It was really a great learning opportunity, Speaker. I think that is something that we can all continue to grow and learn from. We don't have all the answers. We need to hear from people who have been incarcerated. We need to hear from the victims. But we certainly need to continue to support those folks.

There are many, many organizations that are doing great work in the judicial system, that are quietly behind the scenes doing the hard work, and government needs to support them. We're not seeing it reflected here in this budget. It's a missed opportunity.

One of the interesting things that I learned about since pooling together this panel on restorative justice – I received a beautiful email from the Human Rights Commission, our own Human Rights Commission here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

They have a Community Justice Connect and basically, Community Justice Connect is free, voluntary and confidential. The program provides a variety of conflict resolution services to Indigenous, racialized and religious minority communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I didn't even know it existed. I mean, we all know about the Human Rights Commission, but this particular program.

The service is a place where people can find help to address concerns, conflicts and racism – direct, indirect or systemic. They are a place to connect with trained community facilitators who will listen to what's happening, help identify a way to

deal with the situation and connect so that people can derive and find the right supportive services that they require. The commitment is to Indigenous, racialized and religious minority communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and is to provide an authentic service that is accessible, value-based and creative. Phenomenal – what a great resource.

I want to take this opportunity, Speaker, to give it shout-out, the Human Rights Commission, because this is an opportunity. These are the things that we should continue to support.

Who can use Community Justice Connect? Community Justice Connect is open to residents of NL, regardless of immigration status – and we know that we are getting more and more newcomers all the time who need to avail of these kind of services – who identify as Indigenous, racialized or a religious minority, and are experiencing conflict.

Many of our newcomers and our immigrants come to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with all kinds of experiences, trauma. Some come from war-torn countries. Others come and just cultural differences make it so difficult for people to really, truly have a sustainable, healthy lifestyle. So here's an opportunity for people, as newcomers, to come and connect.

Community Justice Connect can also help organizations – here we go – schools, government, workplaces, health care, et cetera – who identify or are in conflict with a person who identifies, from one of these three designated groups. They'll work with organizations that are committed to respectful relations, and they do that by working with the organization designing a conflict-resolution process. Using the principles of restorative justice, anti-racism and anti-oppression, they're going to help you create a plan to address the conflict.

What a wonderful service. It deserves to be shouted out and deserves to be highlighted.

The Human Rights Commission can refer complaints to Community Justice Connect, and this can only happen when both the complainant and the respondent agree to participate. If the Community Justice Connect process is successful, the human rights complaint will be closed. This is the kind of restorative collaboration, again, that we're talking about, that helps us with affordability in our justice system and basically helps us prosper. Helps everybody build better lives.

You can contact them or you can look at it online. The goal of Community Justice Connect is to treat people with honour, dignity and respect; to guide people through difficult conversations on racism, conflict and harm; increase and promote access to justice; focus on relationship building and mutual understanding; support individuals, organizations and community, to understand, explore and address issues of systemic racism; coach people on ways to resolve disputes when the other party is not engaged; be creative; be flexible; meet people where they are; and be accessible.

Conflict can exist in all kinds of spaces in our lives. It's normal; it's healthy. But when it becomes overwhelming, it can impact your life, and we know where those individuals can end up. This helps people understand and deal with the situation and that's a true help.

Conflicts that involve racism, both indirect and direct, can be very difficult. The harm that is created through racism can be devastating. Dealing with these types of conflicts is very hard. You may not know what to do or say, or how to deal with your experiences of racism – because we're all racist, ultimately, and we have to continue to learn – because of the power imbalance in the relationship. So there's support there for these kind of conversations.

They help work through conflict on your own; understand basic government forms or documents – so there's a real hand-holding here to help people move through this process – understand basic legal information; get conflict coaching; address disputes between neighbours and landlords; address issues with your employer; and deal with the experiences of discrimination and/or harassment because of Indigeneity, race or religion.

I just think it's an absolutely fantastic opportunity that the Human Rights Commission has offered to the community. When I learned about it, I wanted to share it because I hear from constituents all the time who are dealing with issues, these kinds of conflicts, which can escalate. Then, one wrong move and people become incarcerated. How can we avoid these kinds of steps? We don't want to see any of us or our families or our friends or our community end up in those kinds of situations.

But the best way to do it is by giving them the supports that they require at the very beginning of their lives, through education, through housing, through food, to ensure that everybody can have healthy food. These are the opportunities where we can really, truly, in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, create a society where people – most people, not everybody is going to avail, but where most people can truly have a better life.

So these are the things – and I think I really wanted to talk about this in relationship to the budget. I'll certainly have lots more to say about the budget as we go forward, but I did want to talk about this particular piece of that pie when we're talking. Because, of course, as the critic for Justice and Public Safety, I'm tasking the minister on a regular basis on a number of different issues, and the reason why is because we have opportunities. We do have opportunities. Some of these have been missed right now, but I do think that we have opportunities in

the future, again, if we collaborate, if we listen to each other.

One of the principles that was talked about on the restorative justice panel was about two-eared listening. We have one mouth, but two ears. So it makes sense to double up your time listening as opposed to speaking. Two-eared listening is really a method where we can train ourselves to truly listen to people, to try to collaborate, and my hope is that this government will avail of a two-eared approach in how it moves forward, in how it decides to govern with a majority government.

We're here to hold you to account. All of us over here, all coming from different vantage points, but we're here to hold the decisions that are being made, the budgets, where you're going to invest, we're here to hold you to account. We want to ensure that we're not spending more and more and more money on incarcerations, on fancy, new buildings without investing in our people.

I'm just going to take the last couple of minutes here just to really, truly talk about the value of education and how it feeds into this model of restorative justice.

I really want to give a shout-out, as well, to Relationships First because they really are one of the leaders in the community that are dealing with restorative justice. We are going to host more opportunities to have these discussions. I certainly hope that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety – because we know it's a concern in our communities; we know people are scared. We read the news every day and we hear about the break-ins and the violence that are happening.

While we do the immediate, band-aid solution, we have to take a step back and truly look at how we can build a better society. By investing in our people, investing in organizations and employing restorative justice models, I think that we truly can

create better opportunities for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise here and speak on behalf of the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, of course, but I'd like to kick off and congratulate Newfoundland and Labrador's very own Alex Hewhook. What a hero he is, and what an exciting game that was last night. He's doing so well and we're very proud of him. We wish him a continued success.

I'm sure many will be watching Thursday night when they take to the ice again to play Carolina, and let's go all the way to the Stanley Cup and have the Habs bring the cup home here to Newfoundland and Labrador this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: That'd be great. It'd be a second time for Alex, as he's already brought the cup here. We know, of course, the first Newfoundlander and Labradorian to bring the cup to Newfoundland and Labrador was none other than Riverhead, Harbour Grace native, Danny Cleary. So congratulations.

Also a big, heartfelt congratulations to Dawson Mercer who is technically a former constituent of mine, growing up in Bay Roberts, but left at a very young age to pursue his hockey talents. He is doing extremely well in the NHL, as well with Team Canada currently in Switzerland. So all the very best. We've got a lot of great talent here, especially when it comes to hockey, in both female and male hockey here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So hats off to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: It is certainly a great game and we'll all be watching, again. Congratulations to them.

Speaking here, now, on budget, we've got about 20 minutes and I'd like to congratulate my two colleagues who just stood up for the past hour and gave great dialogue. They're speaking on behalf of their constituents, so I commend them for doing that.

I'll get to some stuff as well in the budget, but first of all I would like to put on the record the feedback that I'm receiving for the significant cuts of \$66 million in the roads budget. It's not going over very well in my district. Even though I have been fortunate enough to secure and to advocate and to help secure significant resources for roadwork and repair in my district, for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave - that's what we're all here to do, to advocate on behalf of our constituents, our organizations and our municipalities. But there is some work left to do, in particular on the Southside Road in Harbour Grace, as well as Bishop's Cove road.

That said, an update for residents in Bishop's Cove is that we're currently replacing the guiderail. Anybody who's taken a drive along that scenic road in Bishop's Cove knows that there's a significant drop to the ocean. So if something were to happen and anybody goes over that cliff, it's not going to be a good outcome. That said, that work is currently happening and ongoing, so just a respectful reminder to motorists and pedestrians who will be travelling.

I will be continuing to advocate. Also, I've reached out to my colleague who is now the current Minister of Environment with regard to some permits that need to be approved and pushed along for significant work that needs to happen on Southside Road. We

secured significant funding from both the federal government and the province, as well as the municipality. Over \$5 million will go into the water and wastewater installation on Southside Road. Residents on that side of the town are currently on wells and whatnot.

They have been advocating to the Town of Harbour Grace and to elected officials over the years so, finally, we'll be getting a first phase to get that started on that project. As we know, we have a short window when it comes to construction here in our great province. We get one season or two seasons, some would argue. I would encourage and ask for the minister's co-operation that we can get to that so the town can actually get that work under way. Many people are impacted by that.

Again, the roadwork, hopefully, there'll be some reconsideration on what can come from this or even for the next season, but \$66 million is certainly a significant cut.

As my colleagues marked today, it is a historic day, a day that we've been waiting for. We do know prior to last Christmas – not this Christmas past but the one prior – that we found a moment in history where the Province of Quebec was coming to Newfoundland and Labrador, as it is in great need for power, as we all know. We do know that we are finally in a position.

We do know premiers of the past, of all stripes, have tried to take this deal back to the drawing board, have taken it to the courts to renegotiate and to open that. As we do know, Quebec had the advantage and has the advantage until 2041 – not 2041, sorry, I'm getting that confused with the Muskrat.

But back to that, we do know that this is something that premiers of the past have tried to open. We're in a position right now where Quebec is in need of the resources that we have. We had international experts come here on the floor of the House of

Assembly; we would all remember. We had a special debate in January here in this hon. House. Something that the premier of the day supported and, obviously, we agreed as a government to support the Opposition's ask to have the special debate, to have the international experts here with no bias, with no political roots here in this province – they're literally international experts, as my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island has stated, with their credentials on record.

It was like no other. We've never seen that here in the House of Assembly. We all know that we all had time to ask questions and it was a debate on the MOU. We all know how that went. It was disappointing to see the Opposition of the day actually get up and withdraw and not vote either way, and now it's ironic that they're the ones at the steering wheel, if you will, to see this through. So we do know this is historic and a gamechanger for this province.

As my colleague outlined and my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, people are in need now. It's arguably the hardest time in modern history. People are struggling. They're struggling to pay their power bills. They're struggling to put healthy food on the table. Not junk food, not the foods that contribute to disease and bad health, but good foods. We do know that people are struggling in every way.

Again, we do know what's happening in the Middle East. I always say, prayers to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Canadians who are currently living in the Middle East. We know what's happening there, how dangerous it is. So we pray for their well-being, but we also know what's happening in the price of oil and how in hard times, what we're seeing, we know that the Treasury is gaining here in Newfoundland and Labrador with regard to the royalties and to oil.

So we are in a position right now to give a break to the residents of the province. We

are a province that we don't have a lot of public transit outside of the metro and the major centres here in our province. Ironically, we are larger than the Maritimes combined when it comes to geography, but we don't have a lot of the amenities that they have with regard to public transit. We certainly don't have a GO train. We certainly don't have Metrobus. We don't have public transit around the bay, if you will, or in rural.

We do need to drive. People need to drive, whether it's to get to their extracurriculars, whether it's to get to their jobs, how they make their incomes, whether it's to get to their medical appointments. As we know, they come from far and wide to come here to St. John's in the metro region, ultimately, to get this health care that they need to live, in a lot of circumstances. So people need to use their automobiles.

Again, we can always call on government to reconsider – it's great that they extended our Liberal tax break of 2022, which we brought in as an administration, to give people a break at the pumps to reduce the tax on gas, but we ask them to take it further. We are in a position to do so. We do know that. We're in a position to do so.

Again, there's always time. There's no such thing as really permanent legislation where nothing can be changed because with the political will, it can be done. We can always reconvene the House. We've done it. We just did it for special debate, as I just outlined, in January, to bring experts here on the floor to answer questions about the significant MOU. With the political will, it can be done.

I don't think there will be any opposition to helping people when it comes to a break for cost-of-living measures. Again, we know what we've brought in place with the cutting in half of the motor vehicle registration. It's good to see the government continue the work that we put in place. That's encouraging.

That said, too, I would encourage them and challenge them to put their own stamp on things and to even take it a bit further, especially in times where we know we have money and more money is coming into our coffers, based on what we're seeing with the oil.

Also, at this time, we're gearing up in Bay Roberts – I'll just talk about my district for a moment. We have the annual Songs, Stages, and Seafood Festival, which happens in Bay Roberts every May. I guess it follows the May 24 weekend, which is another unofficial kickoff to the summer season in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and, in particular, in Bay Roberts.

We have that happening this weekend where we're going to be featuring local cuisine and culture and music and food and, of course, the company and the camaraderie of the people. I'm always advocating and I'm pleased to say that the continued funding will go ahead to support this festival of \$10,000 for the Bay Roberts Songs, Stages, and Seafood Festival. It's good to see that.

I will get into talking now – we also know that we're getting into a wildfire season. In my district alone, we've had several, just this spring alone. We know the temperatures are not really reflective of the spring season but those fires are still happening. We've heard professionals say that the grass is dry and it's very flammable and it spreads quickly.

We had fires break out that started in Bishop's Cove that made its way all the way to the border of Upper Island Cove. If the wind was blowing in a different direction, I'm told by the fire chief – hats off to Harvey Mercer of Upper Island Cove. He was quick on the scene with the assistance of other departments in the area. He said if the wind was in a different direction that day, it could have been a very devastating situation in our area.

That's just only one, but there have been several. It's important that the resources are in place. I'm always reaching out to the minister about the applications that have gone in for the protective gear, such as bunker gear, and the required equipment that each volunteer firefighter needs to do this work safely. They are at the ready. They are there 24-7.

I can't say enough about them. They are the most bravest, selfless volunteers in the world. Everywhere you go – I mean, I've spent time in New York, when I was down at the United Nations for the women's commission down there and I noticed a huge, huge, beautiful monument that they have a firefighter. We all know the significant role that firefighters played in the 9/11 attacks and how many of them lost their lives, putting their lives on the line to help others. Again, we have to do more to give them the support that they need.

Getting into the Fire and Emergency Services, there are elements that we have to do more to support – were the shared priorities by our party. We're pleased to see the doubling of the volunteer firefighter and search and rescue tax credit; increased investment in equipment and PPE support for training and emergency preparedness; investments in mobile command capacity and these are important steps – and we support them and we talk about them and they're all things that we announced, that we did last year as we went through this unprecedented time and that was obviously in the election platform, the red book.

While the tax credit is certainly welcome and it's certainly welcome to those men and women who do this work, it's not enough. We feel it could have gone further. We had committed to a comprehensive compensation framework for volunteers – one that recognizes the reality that during major emergencies people are missing work and they're incurring their own costs and taking a real risk.

As a matter of fact, I keep in touch and I was talking with the chief of Bay Roberts while this was all happening. It really was a big eyeopener to hear him say – and he called me by name – Pam, when we take that call and we go on that truck, we're ultimately willing to die. We all know that's true.

Again, I just had some admiration – and I think it's consensus. Everybody here supports firefighters, and rightfully so. I know we have some firefighters that are here. Actually, the Member for Lab West is a firefighter and we thank him for his service and his work. We have a lot of admiration for him and anybody, of course, who serves and volunteer fighters that we may have.

We're also seeing a lack of investment where it matters, mostly in prevention. There's very little in the budget to help communities with prevention of wildfires, protect critical infrastructure, build local resilience. We're not seeing commitments around firebreaks, unfortunately, monitoring systems, community-level planning. After the wildfire season that we saw last year that absence is obviously hard to justify.

We know what was taken in. We had significant aerial supports from not just other parts in the country, but through the United States and our neighbours across, ultimately, the continent, what we saw come here. At the same time, wildfires were happening across the country everywhere last summer, across Canada.

We also note that the key response tools that we committed to are missing. The no heavy lift helicopter, no Bird Dog aircraft – and these are not luxury items. They are critical to the rapid response in rural and remote areas. I can certainly attest to that because it was actually a wildfire broke out in Spaniard's Bay, and how that fire started, it started actually in a cemetery on Maul Tree Hill. What it was, one of the bulbs actually caught on fire from the reflection

from the sun, which started a fire. That went up very quickly.

I remember I got calls from municipal leaders and residents saying it's happening in Spaniard's Bay, but thank God for the aerial services that were just down the way on the North Shore, minutes away. They were able to get there and to contain that blaze.

Now, that said, Spaniard's Bay volunteer firefighters, they were on the scene with the assistance of other nearby firefighting departments, but it was the aerial assistance that really made the difference. Thankfully there were no structures that were harmed or impacted; but even today, as you drive by, it's a big reminder of what can happen in just a very short time, to see the cindered woods that are currently still up there.

But again, it was very scary. I'll never forget how I felt last summer. I remember one time I was out for a walk in my neighbourhood in Bay Roberts and I could smell the smoke and I thought for sure that it's happening here. There's something happening. I called the fire department, only to learn that many calls had come in, but it was actually the smoke that was bellowing up from the North Shore.

Hopefully we won't have to go through that again this season. We had a lot of snow, so hopefully that makes a difference. But with that said, everybody can do their part. Check with the provincial department before lighting a fire; check with your municipal leaders on their websites if there could be a potential ban in place. Again, be smart. Consult with the experts before lighting a blaze because it's not just your property or your life that could be potentially impacted, it could wipe out, as we saw, an entire region.

I would like to commend my colleague over there, the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. He's on the ground with his

people, and we share a region. Let me say it here on record, he and I will work together, as well as my colleague, the Member for Harbour Main. We share that region, Conception Bay North, and I know I'm confident that we will certainly all be working together for the betterment of our residents. I will commend those, because those Members are there when we have our meetings and I know they're there for their citizens as well.

That's what we do, and my colleague said that here earlier. There's a lot of great legislation that happens here in this hon. House of Assembly. It is certainly an honour to be a Member. When we can actually collaborate and work together, that's when we make real effective change that the entire province can benefit from. That's important, and we hope we see this going forward.

It is certainly a disappointment, however, to see that the panellists will not make themselves available to the public. Again, I really would encourage the Premier – the Premier has the top job here in this province right now. He is literally the top minister, the Premier of our province right now, and he has been on record saying that the panellists will speak, so they should. He deserves to have that panel carry through on his request. This is a big deal. It affects the lives of the past, present and the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know what's at stake here, billions and billions of dollars, and we can be justified from how Quebec has had the better end of the deal. We know that.

We know that there's retroactive pay that was on the table of a billion dollars alone. Imagine what we could have done in the budget? We do know there are schools. We do know there's a whole region that has to be rebuilt with a new school for CBN. We do know what's happening with health care. It's very disappointing to see the hospital be cancelled because we know it's people from every district that travel here, outside of our

metro regions, to come to avail of the expert health care facilities and health care that are here.

Again, going forward, we're all here to work together on this. It shouldn't be political because we have the opportunity here to be life changing when it comes to this MOU and this deal. I think I speak for everybody, we're all pulling on the same oar when it comes to that. What's best for the people, politics aside, political stripes aside, let's work together. Let's get the best deal for the province because, ultimately, it's the future, it's the present that will benefit. We know the hard state that people are currently in. It's in every district. It's impacting in every district, residents in all of our districts.

So, again, let's see that happen. I can't emphasize enough how we are all elected here on behalf of the constituents to come here and to do the best that we can.

It will be interesting to see, going forward, what more information will come from this. We know what's at stake and hopefully we can work with the Province of Quebec to come with an agreement that obviously supports – and, ultimately, what we're most concerned about are the priorities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Those heavy-lift helicopters, it would have been good to see that because, again, they were just so useful and to even hear the firefighters speak about watching them in action and how effective they are. It could have been a very, very different situation for Spaniard's Bay and Tilton if that aircraft was not in place.

Also, we're happy to say that we did get that fifth water bomber fixed. I think it was \$14.8 million? If my –

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, \$14.8 million.

P. PARSONS: My colleague was very passionate – she was in that role last summer when all this was going on. So

we're happy to invest that and now to see that water bomber finally getting back. Again, we're all here to do the best that we can on behalf of the people of the province.

My time is winding down here now. I look forward to speaking again. I'm speaking here to the amendment to the budget, which my colleague from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair had put in place. It's going to be interesting to see how that goes. I look forward to the other speakers who will be getting up here in this hon. House to speak to the budget.

I will take my place now. I look forward to speaking again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly great to get up here today and represent my district, represent the people of the province as the minister and speak about the things that we are doing.

I respect what the Opposition are doing. I mean to say, we were over there on the other side not too long ago doing the same thing. I appreciate that they want more of this, more of that. This needs to be done. Health care needs to be fixed. Emergency Services needs to be fixed. Housing needs to be fixed. We know that because the Auditor General, of course, has told us that very recently, of how housing and emergency services were addressed in the past few years.

We know there's a lot of funding to go out and address those issues and we're certainly working towards that. For the six months that we've been here, we've been

putting the emphasis on what we need to do. We've heard the stories from our constituents. We heard the stories from the electorate of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that they want change. They wanted change, they got change and we know what they want and we're working towards that to have it done.

I just listened to the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave mentioning forest fires. Fire and Emergency Services, yes, we know that forest fires certainly are becoming devastating. We know we have to protect our communities. One time, we looked at a forest fire and we always thought, well, that's in the woods, that's in the forest, all we saw was smoke. We never really paid a big lot of attention to it years ago, but those monsters now are coming into our communities and we know that we have to be ready for them. We know that. It's destroying our communities. They're not only in forestry, in the woods anymore. They're in our backyards. They're in our communities threatening us. We know that we have to be prepared.

Actually, with regard to the fifth water bomber, I'm glad that the Minister of Transportation finally brought it over the line, got that fifth water bomber back in the air. We were eight years trying to get that, knowing that we had to be ready each year because a few years ago, we saw forest fires back in 2022 in Central Newfoundland, communities on high alert, they needed every bit of protection, every piece of equipment that we could get. We started with the fifth water bomber, asking for it. They flipfopped, they were going to buy, they were going to fix. They didn't know what they were going to do. It went on for years, eight years actually and we kept at them, kept at them, until we finally managed to bring that fifth water bomber over the line.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Not only did we see it in Central Newfoundland, of course, we saw it

in Labrador a couple of years ago, the devastation that it caused up there. Everybody on high alert, we needed every piece of equipment we had for up there. Again, of course, when we look at a year ago, the devastation that it caused in CBN.

Fire and Emergency Services is very dear to me. Something that I'm looking forward to doing as part of my mandate and that is safer communities. That's why in this year's budget we put \$7 million into Emergency Services. We put in \$4.16 million for fire and protection, tools and equipment, that's \$400,000 over last year, because we know how important it is for the volunteer fire departments to protect our communities. We know how important that is.

We did forest fire training for fire departments, working with communities, fire departments, to have training done.

Actually, speaking of that, there's a firefighters' school this weekend in Marystown and we wish all the best to the firefighters and certainly thank them for the service that they provide.

Now, the Member talked about a couple of things that she didn't see. She said there was no money for fire breaks; no money for that kind of stuff in the budget. Well, previous to the budget, we put out \$2.26 million in the Community Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Program, which helped the communities with training and education within their communities – \$2.26 million. Some communities got more and some got less, depending on how they fit with their communities and how the education was being addressed.

Some actually had fire breaks in there. That's why you saw the cost of one probably well higher than someone else's because, of course, fire breaks are expensive. But it was there. She can get up and say that we put nothing into fire breaks. We put \$2.26 million prior to the budget.

Actually, there's another round coming out in a couple of months. I don't know what figure that will be, but just say if it did go to a couple of million, right now that's \$7 million so far that we've put into Fire and Emergency Services in the budget and \$2.26 million previous for the Community Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Program. Another probably a couple of million will show up in a few weeks' time. So far, we're up over \$10 million into Fire and Emergency Services and that will include fire breaks.

The Member can get up and say that we're not putting money into fire breaks. We're not helping the communities. She says she didn't get enough in her area. Well, in the Community Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Program, I certainly hope she didn't help her constituents with the applications because she would have missed it. It wasn't there. So if she checked the applications, that was in there, really.

Then I actually heard the Member on *Open Line* – I think it was *Open Line* – last week talking about tools and equipment, how each community needs equipment, and we know that. We know every community needs equipment. We know that all too well. When I was on the other side, I asked for the same things for my community, for my district. I asked for equipment. I asked for the tanks, breathing apparatuses. I asked for all that. I know how important it was.

She was saying that I hope when that's done, it's not political. No, I hope it's not either, because we will be fair – we will be fair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: But why she had to say she hopes that it's not political – maybe she feels guilty. Maybe that's because she feels guilty of the way it was in past years. Maybe that's the reason. I went back over, did a little bit of checking of where the equipment went –

AN HON. MEMBER: Where did it go?

P. FORSEY: Well, in the past few years – I picked out four or five districts on each side. So in Burgeo - La Poile in the past few years, \$2 million; Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, \$2.1 million; Burin - Grand Bank, \$2 million; Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, \$1.7 million. That's within the past few years. That's the Liberal districts by the way, if you're talking politics – \$7 million.

Now, Cape St. Francis – the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, by the way – \$300,000; Ferryland, \$500,000 the past few years; Stephenville - Port au Port, \$500,000; the Torngat Mountains, \$71,000. In those four districts, \$1.4 million. That would've been the PC districts.

If you look at those numbers in the past few years in those districts, \$7 million went to Liberal districts and \$1.4 million went to PC districts. Maybe she feels guilty. So that's why we will be fair. We don't need treatment like that; we will be fair. We'll certainly be fair about Fire and Emergency Services.

That's why I just wanted to get up and note that, because we're very proud of putting in the resources that we put into it and we're looking forward to putting more resources into it, working with the communities, working with the volunteer fire departments, working with people who matters and make sure that they have the tools and equipment to protect all our districts, all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: So that's what we'll be doing, and we know that this needs to be done because it's very important that we protect our communities.

Not only that, speaking of training, we put \$1.7 million into wildland coveralls. We put \$90 million for wildland training; \$310,000 towards specialized sprinkler trailers to protect critical infrastructure during wildfires;

\$120,000 to upgrade two mobile command trailers; \$770,000 for four regionally stationed enclosed trailers stocked with equipment and personal protective equipment; \$300,000 annually to upgrade technology at the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre so staff can share information and stay connected during emergencies.

Also, \$400,000 annually for Fire Protection Vehicles and Equipment Grant Program; \$2.9 million for P25 radios. We know how important P25 radios are. We know what it is, we hear every day of the services, the Internet services and the Bell services that we have around our communities. We all feel it, we all know it and we know there is work that has to be put into that.

But in the case of emergency, being able to communicate to each other, being able to talk to each other, know where everyone is to at the time, where they're supposed to be, what's happening, timing is very important. Communication is very important, so \$2.9 million into the P25 radios is very important to have that communication within our system.

With all those efforts, this reaffirms our budget measures to protect and create safer communities in this year's budget for all the people, of course, of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what we'll do. We'll continue to do that. We put those efforts in.

Speaker, \$3.9 million for the Fire Services budget for operations, for fire commissioners and structured workers' compensation premiums for all the fire departments. Of course, the Member did mention that we were doubling the tax credits. Those initiatives were put into Fire and Emergency Services, into the emergency services.

So when it comes to placing that equipment, we will place that equipment. We will be looking at the applications. We will be fair. We know we have to be because the people

of our province, the people in our communities, need that protection and we're going to provide that protection to the best ability that we can.

With that, Speaker, that's just part of the budget process that I wanted to talk about because when I hear the Member get up and say that there's no funding in the fire programs for fire breaks – didn't hear anything. It's there, \$2.26 million for education into the communities and programs, which includes fire breaks. We've put a lot into Fire and Emergency Services. We will continue and I look forward to – actually, for the communities that didn't get chosen, didn't get anything in the first round of applications, I certainly recommend that they put in another application.

Some didn't meet the criteria of the applications that we had for the \$2.26 million in the wildfire prevention program. Some didn't meet the criteria. Some put in the wrong wants or needs that was in the criteria. I certainly recommend that they put in another application and send it in. When we make the call that we'll be putting another round out, I look forward to those communities having their applications in so we can be working with that community on their fire breaks and on their training so that we can help them protect their communities, as we promised to do in this budget.

I look forward to working with the communities on that. Hopefully, after that, there may be another round. We're putting as much money as we can in the communities and protection.

In regard to forest fires, we're hiring 50 more forest firefighters – 50 more of them. I'm sure that will work well in the Fire Protection Centre in Gander. Most of them will be stationed at the Fire Protection Centre in Gander. Some will be at the depots throughout the province, of course, that's that the way it works.

All the training will be done at the Fire Protection Centre in Gander. All our equipment is there. The fifth water bomber right now, certainly is there in Gander. It's back in the fleet for this year's service. Again, I'd like to thank the staff at the Department of Transportation for bringing that fifth water bomber over the line, and thank the minister, certainly, for his efforts on making sure that was brought over the line and we brought it back for this year's fire season.

With that, those are things that we are doing in this budget so that we can make safer communities. I know they can't wait to stand up and vote for the budget when the time comes because of the initiatives that we're putting into fire protection and all the gear that we put in, because it's for their fire departments as well as ours on this side. It's for everybody.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. FORSEY: Actually, yes, it's for all of us. That's right. That's where it's going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: I just wanted to get up and make that note because when I hear the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave getting up, saying: B'y, there's no money around for firebreaks. B'y, don't be political about it, no need to be that way about it.

So I just wanted to throw out a few numbers there to correct what is happening in this year's budget. For Fire and Emergency Services, I think it's a great initiative in regard to Fire and Emergency Services in this year's budget.

With that, Speaker, I'll get another chance to get up and have a chat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

As a new MHA, I'm pleased to speak about the budget on behalf of the people I proudly represent in the District of Gander, which includes Appleton, Benton, Gambo, Gander and Glenwood. Of course, anyone who travels this province regularly, I think I have the most efficient district in all of Newfoundland and Labrador. I can get from one end to the other in 45 minutes and I'm so pleased. It allows me a lot of time to spend in the district with the people who I represent. I'm so pleased that we just had constituency week and there was a lot of talk about the budget in the district this week.

Speaker, I would like to thank the public servants, as well, before I get into my remarks about the budget and the people, particularly with the Department of Finance, for their work. I don't have experience leading up to this with a budget of this magnitude, but, certainly, from my municipal experience, I know how much work goes into the budget, the forecasting and the preparation of it to be able to present it to the people for whom the budget is supposed to serve. Thank you to the public servants for that.

I'm also sure that a change of government, particularly in the first year of a new government forming, must entail additional work for those civil servants. Thank you.

As the budget was coming out, from my perspective, I really wanted to pay attention to priorities for the District of Gander, to issues that I heard throughout the campaign. I know that MHAs are going to have a few opportunities to speak to the budget. What I wanted to do was focus on a couple of things in this first set of remarks. It's great that the previous speaker, the minister, spoke about fire services and the Atlantic Wildfire Centre.

Gander, with our central location and our aviation history and government air services. In Gander, if you're ever at Walmart in the parking lot and you're wondering who's from Gander area and who isn't. When a water bomber goes over, when a Hercules goes over, a C-17, a United States Air Force aircraft, whoever looks up, they're not from the area because that's just what you're used to growing up in an aviation community. The water bombers, for example, we're just used to it. It's a part of the fabric of our community.

The announcement in October 2024, and I know that there are Members who were here in October 2024, and I know that there are Members who are new to this House who may not be thoroughly familiar with what the minister referenced earlier and what I've spoken about now, a couple of times.

There was an announcement in October 2024 for the Atlantic Wildfire Centre. It was very exciting and very welcomed for all of us; it really was. So I'll just read now from the joint release, and the provincial government and the federal government were both a part of this.

"Atlantic Wildfire Centre to Provide Leadership and Expertise in Wildfire Fighting, Training and Prevention." From the release, Speaker: "Newfoundland and Labrador is taking the lead to establish a world-class Atlantic Wildfire Centre in Central Newfoundland that will strengthen and enhance efforts to protect Atlantic Canada's communities and forests. Related initiatives will be supported in part through a \$32 million cost-shared, four-year investment in partnership with Natural Resources Canada under the Fighting and Managing Wildfires in a Changing Climate: Equipment fund."

"Located at Gander International Airport" – continuing on here in the release – "the Atlantic Wildfire Centre will provide

leadership and expertise in wildfire fighting and prevention, focusing on:

"Specialized Wildfire Management Expertise: Housing dedicated specialists whose primary role is wildfire management.

"Applied Science and Data Localization: Adapting new innovations, such as drone technology, and national and international research to local conditions.

"Training and Education Programs: Focusing on wildfire management and suppression, wildfire prevention and mitigation, and aerial operations.

"Wildfire Response and Service Delivery: Increasing capacity to manage wildfire and respond to major incidents.

"Wildfire Management and Training Facilities: Building and expanding infrastructure, including facilities for air crews, incident command operations, and equipment storage in Labrador.

"The joint investment through the Fighting and Managing Wildfires in a Changing Climate: Equipment fund includes" – and I know the Members opposite have been excitedly celebrating the return of the fifth water bomber. So that announcement in October 2024 included "repairing the damaged CL-415 aircraft in the current fleet of five waterbombers," and that is in circulation now. I understand it has been taking some flights over and above my district already, scooping up some water from big, beautiful Gander Lake.

It also included "issuing a Request for Proposals to increase the province's air services complement with two new 'Bird Dog' (spotter) aircraft." It's my understanding, Speaker, that those spotters, the Bird Dog aircraft are a necessary component of fighting wildfires because they can do the spotting and then tell the water bombers or the helicopter

drops specifically where the flare-ups are and where to go.

Still now from the announcement, it would also involve “procuring firefighting equipment including fire trucks, command trailers, sprinklers, weather stations, and Nomex suits. Providing extensive training for department wildfire fighting staff.”

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, at the time, also looked at requesting proposals for the design concept of the Atlantic Wildfire Centre campus and related infrastructure at Gander International Airport. Speaker, I was really pleased when I heard the Minister of Forestry, and Emergency Preparedness just now reference the Atlantic Wildfire Centre and to know that this remains a priority and the investment of it into my district.

“Newfoundland and Labrador has the largest forest landscape in Atlantic Canada, with many communities located in the heart of fire-driven ecosystems where wildfires occur consistently, especially in Labrador and Central Newfoundland....

“The province maintains the most substantial aerial wildfire suppression resources in Atlantic Canada The region has an established combination of infrastructure, strategic location, professional staffing, private sector and community partners at Gander International Airport, and training supports are in place at the existing Forest Fire Protection Centre in Gander.”

Speaker, there was a lot of commentary that day about establishment and the announcement around the Atlantic Wildfire Centre. Someone, that day, said the Atlantic Wildfire Centre will make Newfoundland and Labrador a world leader in forest protection. There’s a great team in place, doing incredible work at Air Services Division and in the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

In my time as deputy mayor with the Town of Gander, I was really privileged to tour the facility. I was also pleased when they permitted us, challenged us in fact, to lift up some of the mobile firefighting tools that they use. So the mobile pump that these wildfire fighters carry on their backs with that heavy firefighting protection, the clothing on, the suits, with this heavy, heavy pump and then they go up into the woods in what’s already hot temperatures, given the time of year in fires, it’s really physical work, really demanding work and it takes special people who are able to suit up like that and head off into the environment in Newfoundland and Labrador in forest fire season to tackle those fires.

Speaker, the Atlantic Wildfire Centre is an opportunity to invest in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who work so hard to support us and our communities. This is a way to provide support, resources, training that assist those individuals who protect our forests and our community right across the province. Because of all of that, Speaker, I was really attuned to what we would hear in the budget.

In the Budget Speech, I was very pleased to hear when the Minister of Finance reported, as part of *Budget 2026*, we are also going to invest in more wildland firefighters, those who are on the very front lines of battle. I’m here to say we will be hiring an additional 25 wildland firefighters right away, with 25 more to come.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Minister of Forestry, and Emergency Preparedness for a conversation that we did have about this investment and the placement of the majority of those firefighters, where they rightly belong, with the Atlantic Wildfire Centre in Gander.

So I was also –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

I want to hear the hon. Member for Gander speaking.

B. FORD: I was also paying attention to the budget for priorities related to working with the federal government on defence spending and nation-building projects. As Members here in the House heard in my Member's statement, I had a small army of representatives from 9 Wing Gander, who happened to be here in the city for training and meetings, who we coordinated to attend that day.

Speaker, 9 Wing Gander, it doesn't get referenced a lot, I find. I know that there's a lot of attention paid to 5 Wing Goose Bay and their role in national defence now, I think, is going to be greater than ever. Growing up in Gander, not only a story about the water bombers and about the military aircraft – I'm surprised I'm telling this story in this hon. House to be in a *Hansard* record forever.

Growing up in Gander, we were always told, in the late '70s, early '80s, that the turkey farm in Gander – I hope I'm not giving away any state secrets here – as we affectionately call it because it's surrounded by wiring that I only assume, if you keep turkeys, that's how you build a fence around turkeys, they monitored the submarine traffic in the oceans. We were always told as children, if war breaks out, like big significant war, duck, watch out because there's stuff aimed at Gander to take out the turkey farm because of the monitoring that it did for submarine travel all across our waterways. It's called, yes, the turkey farm, affectionately, because of the wire fence.

I say this because 9 Wing Gander has a significant role in what happens in national defence, not only in Newfoundland and Labrador but right across the country.

I'll just refresh people. Speaker, 9 Wing Gander is supported by 250 Canadian Armed Forces, regular and reserve members, plus 50 civilians and contractors.

It's home to 103 Search and Rescue Squadron. So, again, you know they're not from the region when a Cormorant goes over and you look up because that's part of the fabric of our community. It's home to 9 Air Reserve Flight and 91 Construction Engineering Flight. It hosts the 5th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group. The Canadian Forces Station Leitrim Detachment provides critical signal intelligence and if you see the big golf balls in Gander as part of the radar system, it maintains coastal radar on behalf of the fighter group Canadian NORAD Region Headquarters supporting Canada's aerospace and Maritime security.

Speaker, I was disappointed when I didn't see any reference, specifically, to 9 Wing Gander in the budget. I do know that there have been meetings between officials with Gander International Airport Authority and the municipality with the Premier's office. I really appreciate that that meeting happened and that it's on the radar that 9 Wing Gander is positioned to contribute to those nation-building projects and is prime for some investment from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to help leverage some of that federal funding. It's a real concrete way for government to bring in federal money to help bolster Canada's security right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, I will have more to say on the budget and issues that I heard in the district throughout constituency week when we get back together again.

One of the things I did hear, there's a lot of concern around the allotment of summer students and I believe that is related to the budget. I was very disappointed. I've given some kudos and some congratulations and thank yous here in my speech, so I do want to say, however, I was disappointed that, as a new MHA, I was asked to rank who I would like to see receive a student position. However, I wasn't provided with any budget to help me in that process.

I'm also disappointed that, as an MHA, although I'm on Opposition, I've requested a list of who has received a student through the grant program and I've been refused a list. I understand that's not the way it has been done in previous years. In previous years, lists would be made available even to Opposition. So I'm disappointed in that because I know that volunteer organizations, particularly in my district, really count on student support to help give their volunteers a break and to supplement their work in the summer. That's disappointing.

I really can't sit down today without saying this. Again, I will have substantive issues to talk about in my other two opportunities to speak to the budget and to the amendments – important issues to the people of my district – but, I have to say, I was so pleased today to hear reference to my poem during Question Period. I was so pleased. I believe the Government House Leader referenced my poem and asked if I shared it with Quebec as part of our discussion about the report on the review.

Speaker, I just want to clarify – we're outside of Question Period – the answer is no, I have not shared my poem with Quebec. In fact, I'd like to read my poem for –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. FORD: No, no, no, I can't. I can't. I want to because it was really a hook for me to draw attention to some of the issues that I saw. So I would love to read my poem into the official records here for *Hansard* and for the information of anyone who doesn't follow my Facebook page. However, Speaker, I took poetic licence and I called some hon. Members opposite by name in my poem and I don't think we have time this afternoon to research a ruling on whether or not referring to people by name when quoting poetry or literature is permitted. Therefore, it will not be read. However, it lives on in Facebook where I left the

comments open and have lots of support and lots of detractors, had a lot of engagement and fun on Saturday engaging, rightly so, as political figures are expected to. So it's available.

I have, however, since turned off comments because I knew I'd be busy this week here when the House opened, so my attention span for Facebook is limited once the House of Assembly is opened.

Speaker, that's been a little bit of silliness, but I will end with one comment because that poem was about the process and it was about the review process for the review of the MOU. So the fact that stakeholders who the government invited in to advise the review panel will not be identified and, in fact, were guaranteed anonymity to help the government choose a path forward, that is not transparent and it is not accountable to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Seeing the time of the day, I move, seconded by the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, that the debate now be adjourned.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the debate do now be adjourned.

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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: Before we vote on the motion, Members are reminded that the Resource Committee will meet in the Chamber tonight at 6 p.m. to consider the Estimates of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts; and Recreation.

All those in favour of the motion to adjourn?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, May 20, at 10 a.m.

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